SPECIAL REPORT: TOXIC FITNESS SUPPLEMENTS

November 2009 | Volume 18 | Number 10

# Men's Journal

Escape Now!
BEST PLACES TO SAIL, SURF, DIVE & KICK BACK

Survival Miracle
A FATHER, A SON & A KILLER RIPTIDE

Mayhem & Glory
WORLD'S MOST DEADLY RACE

Inside Jay Leno's 105-Car Garage

The Redemption of
## TIM McGRAW
How He Faced Down His Anger, His Drinking & His Father's Abandonment

THE BEST NEW SKIS, BOARDS, BOOTS & HELMETS

MENSJOURNAL.COM

NOVEMBER 2009 | VOLUME 18 | NUMBER 10

# CONTENTS

## WINTER GEAR 2009

THE BEST NEW SKIS, BOOTS, SNOWBOARDS, AND ACCESSORIES TO HELP YOU RULE THE SLOPES, P. 113

*The Redemption of Tim McGraw* | 76
We meet the real man under the iconic black cowboy hat as he takes stock of a lifetime's achievements.
*by* **STEPHEN RODRICK**

*I Am Birdman, Hear Me Roar* | 82
Beyond its giant stone statues, Easter Island has another bizarre legend: the primitive Birdman race. Our writer takes on the perilous route, traversing land, sky, and sea.
*by* **BUCKY McMAHON**

*Jay Leno's Time Machines* | 90
The sheer size and eccentricity of the TV host's car collection are legendary, but few have seen it firsthand.
*by* **EZRA DYER**

*Lost in the Waves* | 98
After a riptide sucked them out to sea, Walt Marino and his son, Christopher, fought for their lives in the dark, miles from shore. Then Walt had to make a terrible decision: Drown together, or let go of his son.
*by* **JUSTIN HECKERT**

**ON THE COVER**

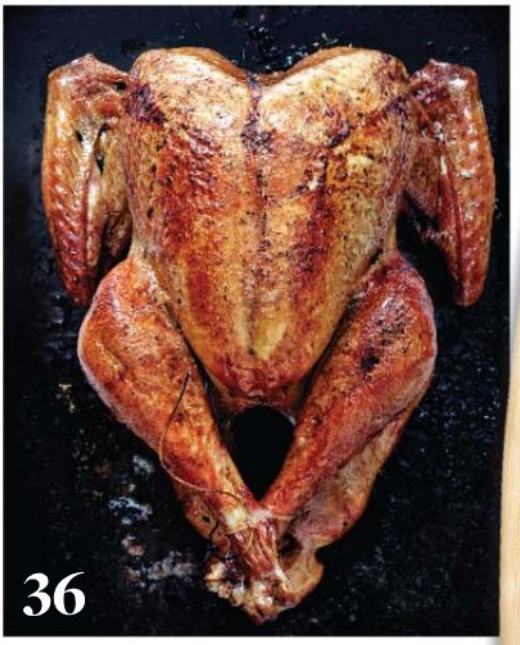
Tim McGraw, photographed exclusively for *Men's Journal* by NICK LEARY on August 21, 2009, in Franklin, Tennessee. Styling by JOHN OLSON. Grooming by RACHEL DWYER for TRIM Classic Barber & Legendary Beauty. Production by MOLLIE JANNASCH for Agency MJ. McGraw wears a T-shirt by CALVIN KLEIN and his own hat.

photograph by **Travis Rathbone**

MEN'S JOURNAL

NOVEMBER 2009 | VOLUME 18 | NUMBER 10

# CONTENTS



## MIND & BODY

63 | The dirty truth about the supplement industry **PLUS:** Fitness aids that are safe and effective

68 | The office setup that prevents chronic pain

71 | Techniques for improving your memory

74 | Paddleboarder Ed McCall's workouts for the working man

75 | Dr. Bob talks HGH

## NOTEBOOK

18 | World's strongest beer

19 | Fastest flying humans

30 | Inside an NFL telecast

34 | A golfer's dream resort

36 | Picking the perfect turkey

40 | The best blended wines

42 | Shep Smith's obsessions

50 | Stewart Brand's heresies

## WORLD'S MOST DEADLY RACE

One course, 131 total deaths in 102 years. The Tourist Trophy race on the Isle of Man is not an endeavor for the mentally sound. *page 54*

## GEAR

124 | The latest basketball shoes, tested and rated

126 | Axes put to the test **PLUS:** How to swing one like a pro

## STYLE

106 | Seven watches that will never fall out of fashion

108 | The best all-weather gear for any occasion, whether work or play

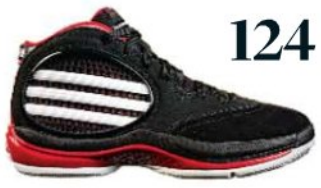
## COLUMNS

60 | **THE LOW POST**
*by Matt Taibbi*
How commercialization is killing sports — and me

154 | **SURVIVAL SKILLS**
Charles Barkley on the best way to get — and keep — a rebound

12 | Letters

14 | Contributors




CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: KEVIN WHITE; MARCUS NILSSON; COURTESY STIHL; JEFF HARRIS; DAVID COLLISTER

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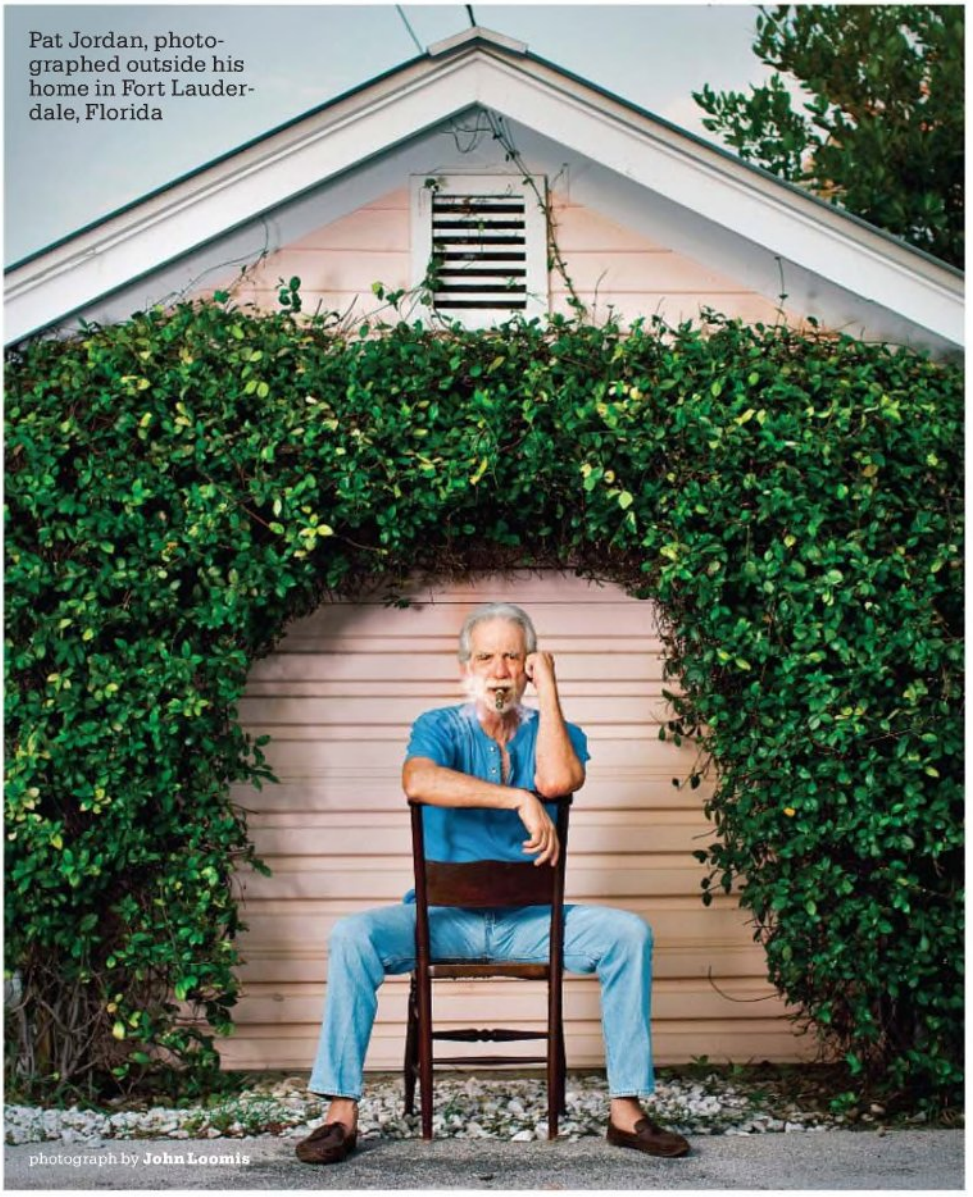
# LETTERS



Pat Jordan, photographed outside his home in Fort Lauderdale, Florida

photograph by **John Loomis**

EVERY PERSON FEELING THE RAVAGES OF TIME SHOULD read Pat Jordan's "You Get Old" [September]. As I smashed into 50, I (successfully) challenged myself to bike up Mount Evans, Colorado, one of the highest paved roads in North America. Individuals lose the sense that there are others harboring secret wishes, regrets, and fears about getting old. Jordan writes about all those with pointed, supreme eloquence. —*Christopher Langdon, Richmond, TX*

"YOU GET OLD" WAS THE best piece of journalism I have read in a long time. I am the same age as Jordan, and I laughed and cried my way through the article. He hit the challenge of having a young mind and being trapped in an aging body right on the head.

—DENNIS BENFIELD
*Redding, CA*

JORDAN'S ESSAY WAS A revelation for me. At 56, I dread the loss of physical ability and social presence. Jordan gave me something to chew on and some things to actually look forward to.

—TONY DOGGETT
*Arlington, VA*

I'M IN THE ARMY AND ONLY 24, but this had to be the most truthful article I've ever read. Now I don't think I'll have as hard of a time dealing with the fact that getting old happens to us all; there is nothing you can do about it but try to live with no regrets. So, thanks.

—JEFFREY BRAUNNS
*Springdale, AR*

AS AN EX-NAVY SEAL, MARathon runner, and ultramarathon bicyclist who's been grappling with aging, I was looking forward to the insights of this article. But after reading it, all I wanted to do was slit my wrists. Thanks a load!

—RICHARD DILORENZO
*Muncie, IN*

### THE TRUTH ABOUT ZOMBIES

I WAS SUCKED IN BY THE fantastical world Mischa Berlinski created ["Into the Zombie Underworld," September]. It was surreal. That he didn't demand that readers believe him only seemed to add to the truth of the story. I wanted to shake it off, to acknowledge that I had been entertained and that the world presented in the piece was somehow separate from my own, but I couldn't.

—CRAIG HEIMBUCH
*Mason, OH*

WHAT AN AMAZING ARTIcle, although it makes me very angry to hear of such rabidly parasitic human beings.

—MARILYN SMALLING
*Irvine, CA*

### CANINE CRITICISM

DON'T BE SO FAST TO TRASH the standard poodle ["Your Dog: A User's Manual," by Bill Gifford, September]. Ours has fended off coyotes from my wife, retrieved birds, chased a K9 German shepherd back into a patrol car, and — intelligently — avoided rattlers when confronted by them. We do not give her froufrou haircuts, but cut her to be a protector.

—RICK "DOC" HURST
*Thousand Oaks, CA*

I WAS DISGUSTED BY THIS article. The first thing you say is

that it all starts with a good breeder. No, no, no! Why assume a man would purchase a purebred dog as opposed to adopting a dog? You save the adoption option for later, and make it sound difficult and undesirable. Your stance is ignorant, outdated, and distasteful.

—BEN JONES
*Little Rock, AR*

**THE SCHOOLER**

AFTER READING YOUR ARTICLE on Roynell Young's crusade to take young boys back from the streets ["Making Men," by Paul Solotaroff, September], I was impressed with his determination and methods. If only more overpaid sports stars would do the same, we could put a dent in the tragedy that is taking place across this nation.

—CJ LOZANO
*Costa Mesa, CA*

THIS ARTICLE MADE ME think back to a time when Young and I played football at Alcorn State University. Roy "The Schooler" was always a warrior in all his endeavors. It's no surprise that he has committed himself to the challenges that are before him.

—ORRICK "MOON" DIXON
*Orangeburg, SC*

**TWO TAKES ON TAIBBI**

I HAVEN'T SEEN A FRESH journalistic perspective like this ["If I Ran the NFL," by Matt Taibbi, September] since Hunter Thompson. The first article I read of Taibbi's was about Al Davis and Isiah Thomas, and it made me laugh for days, not to mention it was 100 percent accurate. Sports journalism and broadcasting are dead art forms right now because they are dominated by jock sniffers and former jocks.

—DAN NEAL
*from mensjournal.com*

I AM A FAN OF YOUR MAGAzine. However, I cannot fully express how upset and dismayed I was to find the following lines in Taibbi's piece: "Corners are helpless/Arena football is gay." I find this flagrant and irresponsible use of the term "gay" to be so reprehensible and embarrassing that I am rescinding my *Men's Journal* subscription.

—RABBI BENJAMIN DAVID
*Roslyn Heights, NY*

**EASY-BAKE BREAD**

I WAS SO DELIGHTED WITH the recipe for "The Easiest Bread You'll Ever Bake" by Jim Lahey [September]. I have been baking bread for more than 35 years. Then I tried this, and it worked like a charm. It was so crisp, and the inside was so chewy-perfect. I sent my daughter a Dutch oven for her birthday so she can bake the bread too.

—MARIE BOUDRYE
*Pequot Lakes, MN*

**BEACH MIX-UP**

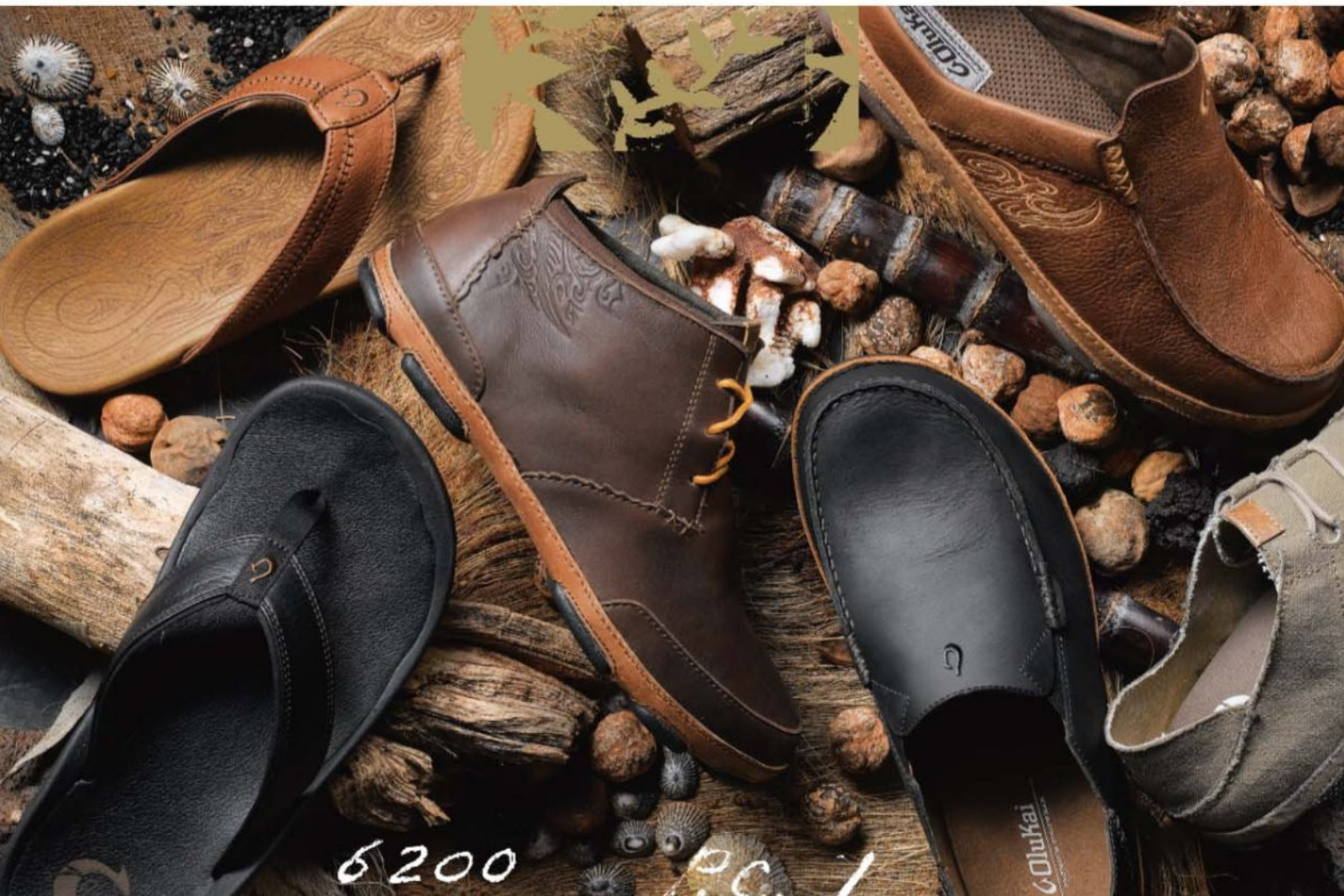
ON THE TABLE OF CONtents page from the July/August issue, you have a photo of a beach with the caption "Surfers on Oregon's Cannon Beach." Great photo, but wrong beach: It is Cape Kiwanda in Pacific City, about 70 miles south of Cannon Beach. Both beaches do have haystack rocks, but the one in Pacific City is distinctive in that it has a "handle" on the right side like a coffee cup.

—BOB VALDEZ
*Salem, OR*

**LOVE-DRUG SUGGESTION**

I HAVE JUST ONE QUESTION for Frederick Kaufman ["The Libido Drug," September]: What were you thinking? Real men see their wives' naked breasts and get aroused. But you blow $65 to test the drug on a *man*? Every guy on the planet just wants to know if the drug works on women! Give it to your wife! Better yet, give it to the old dude who wrote the sad-sack article "You Get Old."

—CHRIS SHAVER
*Barto, PA*



## Justin Stephens

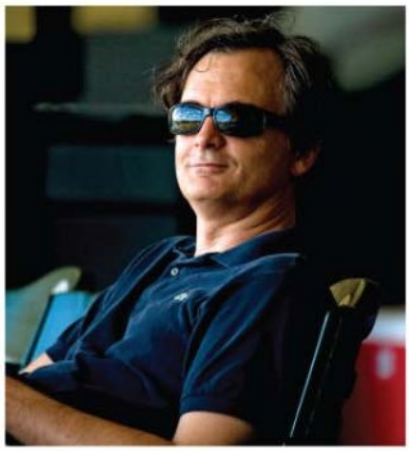
*"Jay Leno's Time Machines,"* **PAGE 90**

"There was one great joke, but it was so off-color I couldn't even tell you," says Stephens about his photo shoot for our feature on Jay Leno and his cars. Stephens, 34, had the TV host step back in time, setting up a 1920s Hollywood in Leno's museumlike garage, using his antique Bentley as a prop. "It was the first time that an actual set was built in his shop," explains Stephens, who lives in Huntington Beach, California. "He was very on it, playing the role that he was given, taking us right back to the '20s with little direction."

## Stephen Rodrick

*"The Redemption of Tim McGraw,"* **PAGE 76**

Rodrick and McGraw have one thing in common: They both grew up in a house full of women. "That gives you a view from the other side that tames the excessive testosterone," explains Rodrick, 42, who went skeet shooting and off-roading with McGraw on his farm. "He's a little more sensitive and reflective than I'd imagined." Included four times in the *Best American Sports Writing* anthologies, Rodrick says his greatest adventure came while covering Colombian drug wars. "I was in a helicopter, and the pilot told me to keep my eyes on the ground for snipers. This didn't fill me with confidence."

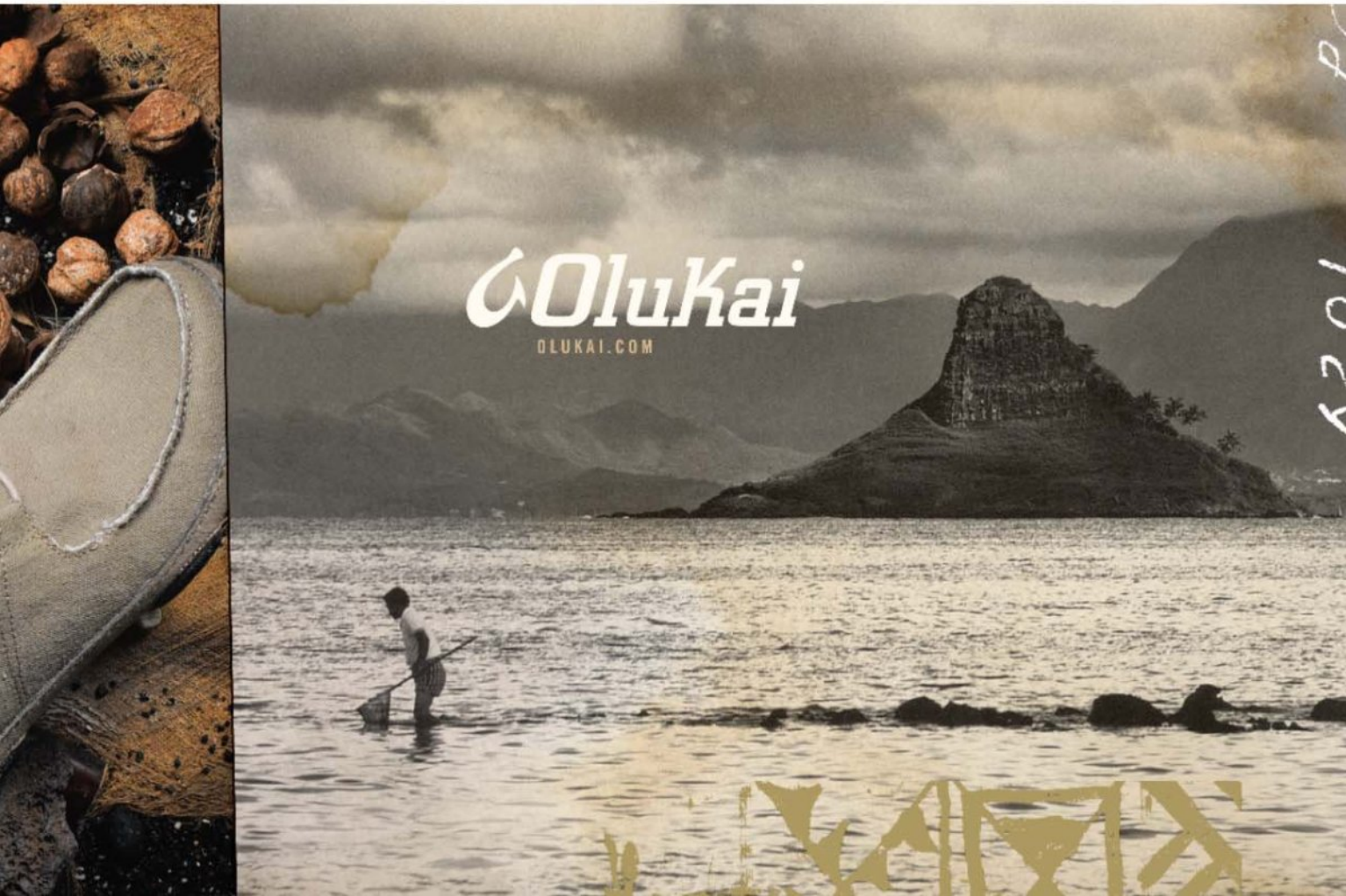


## Justin Heckert

*"Lost in the Waves,"* **PAGE 98**

Growing up in landlocked Missouri, Heckert always had a fascination with the ocean. "I've been in awe of it since I was a kid," says the 30-year-old Atlantan. "It was a struggle to tell this story because the ocean, possibly, has been written about more than anything else, and I wanted to write about it in a new way." To get a feel for his subjects, a father and son who were lost at sea for more than 12 hours, Heckert visited the family in Florida and spent time going back to the scene. "The guys who found the dad took me to the exact spot where they found him," he says. "The ocean was this amazing character to me."

FROM LEFT: CHRIS TOMKO; MITCHEL GRAY; AMANDA B. HECKERT



**wish you were here**

# Lost Rocks, Redwood National and State Parks, California

JUST SOUTH OF WHERE THE KLAMATH RIVER SPILLS into the Pacific, climber Joe Kinder tackles a bouldering problem on one of the Lost Rocks dotting this stretch of beach. "The coast of Northern California is off the radar for most climbers," says Tim Kemple, who took this shot of Kinder. "The sea spray and fog often wash the chalk from the holds. Combine that with a lack of crowds, and there's a certain solitude to the place." The ropeless routes range from six to 30 feet in height, with the sand acting as a natural mat for climbers to fall on. But it's not all about climbing in these parts: Each autumn, the rain and fog that blanket the area most of the year finally lift, making it an ideal time to mountain bike one of the national park's seven trails, jog for miles along the beach, or surf or kayak offshore. "Just watch out for the whales and sharks," warns Kemple. —DACUS THOMPSON

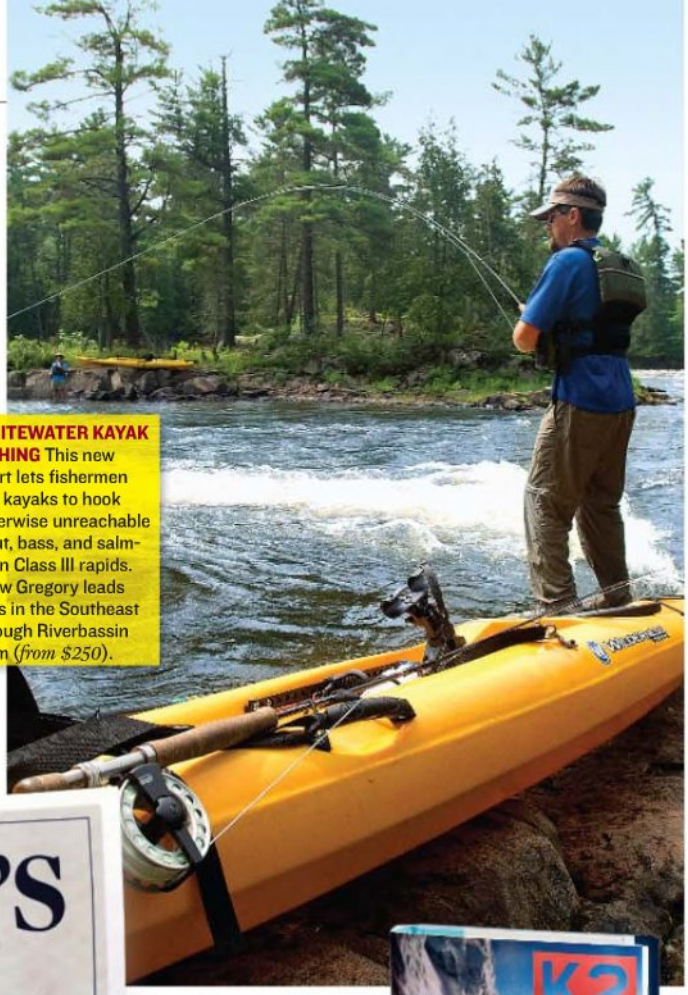
photograph by **Tim Kemple**

# NOTEBOOK

## NOVEMBER 2009

## Pocket Reveille

Swiss Army's travel alarm has all the beauty and simplicity of its knife, plus tweezers and toothpick (*$550; swissarmy.com*).



**WHITEWATER KAYAK FISHING** This new sport lets fishermen use kayaks to hook otherwise unreachable trout, bass, and salmon in Class III rapids. Drew Gregory leads trips in the Southeast through Riverbassin.com (*from $250*).

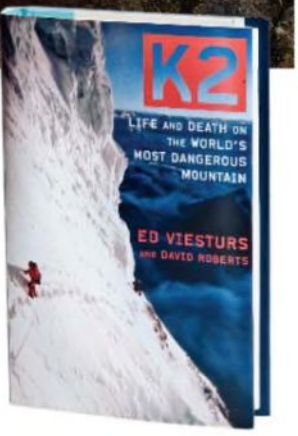
**FACIAL HAIR OF THE DOG** Portland General Store's Whiskey Skin Quench aftershave balm has an earthy, spicy aroma that doesn't smell *exactly* like whiskey, but close enough — more Don Draper than Mel Gibson (*$20; etsy.com*).

# WHAT'S NEW

NOVEMBER 2009

## Catching Air Indoors

"I've wanted to make a game with a skateboard controller for a long time," Tony Hawk says, "but the technology just wasn't there." With *Ride*, Hawk's new game from Activision that uses a motion-sensing skate deck to pull off moves — from the kick-push and hand grabs to 360s (but without the broken bones) — Hawk gets his wish (*$119; thride.com*).




## Inside K2

The new book from the U.S.'s most accomplished alpinist is about K2, but his real subject is risk. And he shares his own: "Scott [Fischer] never saw it. I had time just to look up and see a wave of snow swallow him before he disappeared.... Then — *boom*! The rope came tight in a wrenching jolt, and I was plucked out of my little hole like a knife out of butter." (*$26*)

## The World's Strongest Beer

At 27 percent ABV, the new Utopias is rich and a bit sweet, more like cognac than ale (*$150; samadams.com*).

SWISS ARMY ALARM: COURTESY SWISS ARMY; FISHING: JOCK BRADLEY; K2: BEER, AND AFTERSHAVE: MICHAEL PIRROCCO; BOARD: COURTESY ACTIVISION; TONY HAWK: JAMIE MCDONALD/GETTY IMAGES

# RECORD BOOK

## Racing Against Gravity

FOG, RAIN, AND mid-August snow left jumpers at the World BASE Race, over Innfjorden, Norway, with fingers too cold to pull their chutes on the first try. "I didn't bring gloves, so I had to put socks over my hands," says Neil Amonson, a dorm supervisor in Park City, Utah, whose new love of BASE jumping led him here.

The concept is simple: Jumpers pair off and plunge from a 2,800-foot cliff, wingsuits spread like flying squirrels, trying to rocket across the finish line first. The winner then hikes back up to race again. Norwegian veterans **Frode Johannessen** (inset) and Petter Bergsjo raced for gold, while American rookie Amonson faced his "idol," Croatian wingsuit pioneer Robert Pecnik, for the bronze. All four finished in less than 19.5 seconds, clocking more than 150 mph, but Johannessen claimed the title of world's fastest flying human. Amonson is already gunning for next year's medal stand. "It's a new sport, and we're still breaking down the physics," he says. "I'm going to strap weights to my chest to see if that makes a difference." (*worldbaserace.com*) —CHARLES COXE

## Steam Machines

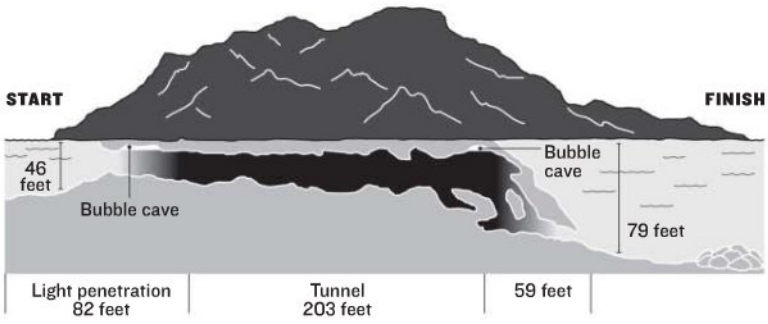
On August 26 at Edwards Air Force Base, a vehicle driven by **Don Wales** (inset) surpassed the world record for steam-powered land speed – which had stood for 103 years. The sleek Batmobile-shaped car averaged 148 mph, finally besting by 20 mph the Stanley Steamer driven by Fred Marriott on a Florida beach in 1906. The British team produced a machine of durability and power; by contrast, the original wood Steamer (which unofficially hit 150 before splintering) was the weight of a Smart car, with horsepower like a small tractor's. So how would the British car have fared against the 1906 record-holder? "It was well ahead of its time," says British crew chief Nick Bass. "But with enough run-up we would have beaten the Steamer." —DARREN REIDY

**Stanley Steamer**
**Top average speed:** 128 mph
**Horsepower:** 30 (one boiler)
**Body:** 1,675 lbs, inverted wood canoe
**Cost (in today's dollars):** $100,000
**Engine:** Piston (like a steam locomotive)
**Years to build:** Five months (estimated)

**British Steam Car**
**Top average speed:** 148 mph
**Horsepower:** 360 (12 boilers)
**Body:** 6,000 lbs, steel-carbon composite
**Cost:** $1 million
**Engine:** Two-stage turbine
**Years to build:** 10

## The Longest Dive

On August 6, **Mike Wells** became the first to free-dive Fish Rock Cave, Australia's longest underwater tunnel, off the coast of New South Wales. The 19-year free-diving vet conquered the winding 400-foot cavern in pitch-black waters teeming with fish, crustaceans, and sharks in two minutes and 48 seconds. Maintaining a steady heart rate was no easy feat, especially after his fin got stuck in a crevice. —MARTIN MULKEEN

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# ADVENTURE CENTRAL

The ideal low-cost getaway awaits in Central America — book it before you get left in the cold.

Ben's Bluff waterfall is one of many beautiful places to swim in Belize's Cockscomb refuge.

## JUNGLE TREKKING

### BEST PLACE TO DO IT

**COCKSCOMB BASIN WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, BELIZE**

For most people, Belize conjures images of tropical reefs. But that's just scratching the surface; because Belize's colonists settled on the coasts, its interior is thick with great expanses of untouched jungle, much of which can be hiked.

The country's best trek is in the 128,000-acre **Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary and jaguar preserve**, which was the world's first such reserve, founded in 1986 after zoologist **Alan Rabinowitz** convinced the Belizean government to protect the 60 jaguars concentrated in the area. Within the park towers **Victoria Peak**, Belize's second tallest mountain and the destination of a four-day hike through land teeming with otter, puma, ocelot, more than 375 types of bird, and, of course, jaguar. Spend the night in one of the park's campsites or cabins (*from $10*), and at first light, head out on the 30-mile round-trip trail (open February through April). The highlight is a section of rock scrambling that requires the help of a rope. The trail ends with you above the treeline, taking in views of the Caribbean Sea from the 3,675-foot summit. Because the terrain is so rough, you're required to hire a guide for the trek before entering the preserve at nearby **Maya Center** (*$5.50 park entrance fee, $200 for guide; belize audubon.org*).

### BEYOND THE JUNGLE

For something more luxurious, stay at **Ka'ana Resort and Spa** in Belize's **Cayo district**, an outpost for basically any adventure — from zip-lining and canoeing to Mayan archaeological sites and horseback riding. The resort offers five-star dining in the heart of the jungle (*from $250; kaana belize.com*). —NICOLE CUSICK

### MORE PLACES TO TREK

**MONTEVERDE CLOUD FOREST, COSTA RICA**

Ideal for wildlife lovers, the family-friendly Sky Walk lets visitors trek for two hours high up in the jungle canopy, crossing five man-made suspension bridges. There you'll spot some of the thousands of species here, including the stunning quetzal bird (*$30; anywherecostarica.com*).

**EL MIRADOR RUINS, GUATEMALA**

To reach these massive Mayan ruins, you have to machete through the jungle for two days. But the 15-square-mile site, where an entire civilization once lived, is the most extensive and uncrowded in the Mayan world. Ni'tun offers weeklong excursions (*$1,540; nitun.com*).

**TIP:** For the jungles of western Belize, you can save $300 or more by flying to Guatemala City, Guatemala, instead of Belize City — which also allows you to see the famous Mayan ruins at Tikal before crossing the border.

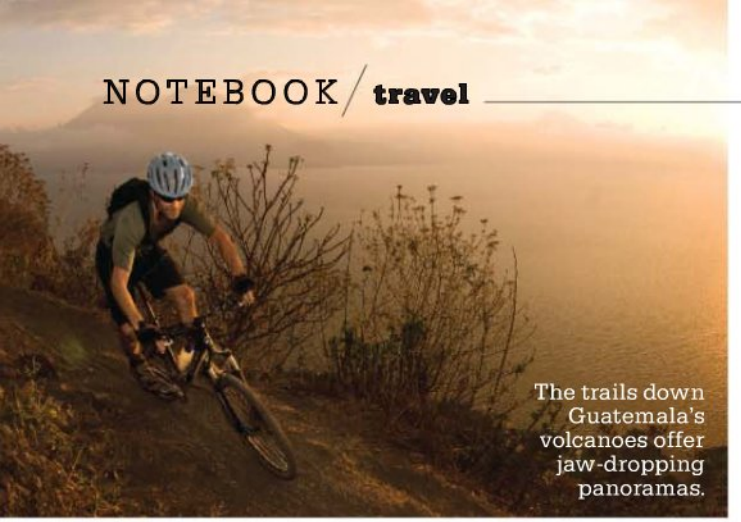
## MOUNTAIN BIKING

### BEST PLACE TO DO IT

**ANTIGUA, GUATEMALA**

Guatemala's dirt paths, rolling hills, towering volcanoes, and rambling back roads make it a paradise for bikers. **Antigua**, a well-preserved colonial town amid three volcanoes (**Agua**, **Fuego**, and **Acatenango**), offers some of the country's most jaw-dropping terrain. Bunk at **Hotel Quinta de las Flores**, where you can take in views of

TONY RATH



The trails down Guatemala's volcanoes offer jaw-dropping panoramas.

the cloud-piercing volcano you'll be tackling on your bike.

Rent your wheels from **Old Town Outfitters** and book its daylong **Volcano Ride**, a cross-country singletrack route that rings **Volcán Agua** on farmers trails and ancient footpaths. You'll start out pedaling through dense green forests, progress through corn and coffee fields, and, for the finale, scream down five miles of singletrack along the side of the 12,350-foot Agua (*$40; adventureguatemala.com*).

### BEYOND THE VOLCANOES

If you want to sneak in some time on famed **Lake Atitlán** (and you should), Old Town also offers a two-day pedal and paddle excursion that will drop you down 2,000 vertical feet of singletrack before arriving at the Mayan village-ringed lake. From there you'll head, via kayak, to secret swimming holes and cliff jumps before spending the night at a lakeside hotel reachable only by paddle (*$209; adventureguatemala.com*). —N.C.

**TIP:** Visit Livingston, a Garífuna beach town reachable only by boat from Río Dulce, for *tapado*: a delicious dish that combines red snapper, crab, squid, and shrimp with the unlikely flavors of coconut milk and banana.

### MORE PLACES TO BIKE

**COPPER CANYON, MEXICO**

At four times the size of the Grand Canyon, Mexico's Copper Canyon is the biggest such system in North America. On this 80-mile hiking-biking expedition, you'll ride along soaring waterfalls, mining villages, imposing canyon walls, and rugged desert scenery *($2,000 for a nine-day excursion; rei.com)*.

**SOBERANIA NATIONAL PARK, PANAMA**

Only 15 miles outside of Panama City, Soberanía National Park is easily accessed from the city via the Madden Road to Gamboa — in fact, many bikers ride straight from the capital to the park, which covers about 85 square miles. Once inside the park, on the 15-mile Pipeline Road, you'll happen upon panoramic canal views and share paths with green iguana, several types of monkey, and up to 500 species of bird, here in Latin America's birders paradise.

## SURFING

### BEST PLACE TO DO IT

**CENTRAL NICARAGUA**

After slipping under the travel radar due to decades of revolution, Nicaragua is back on the map — unfortunate news for those surfers who have long known about the country's near constant offshore winds, low-80s water temps, and clean, world-class waves. The surfing epicenter is expat favorite **San Juan del Sur** in the southwest, which is striking distance by boat from such celebrated breaks as **Popoyo** and **Manzanillo**. But to escape the crowds, move up to the harder-to-access north-central coast for empty lineups, offshore winds 250-plus days a year (minus the unpleasant gusts that can batter the south), and an authentic *Nicaragüense* vibe. Eliminate the challenges of unruly roads and tough-to-find breaks with an outfitter like **Surf Tours Nicaragua**, which will take you by boat or 4x4 to the best spots (*seven-day packages from $800; surftoursnicaragua.com*).

Towns like Chinandega have become surfer retreats.

**TIP:** March through September is known for the biggest swells (up to 20 feet), but November can be quite good as well — plus it offers excellent offshore fishing for marlin, dorado, and more.

### BEYOND THE WAVES

Rising from **Lake Nicaragua**, **Isla de Ometepe** makes for a perfect day of paddling: a picturesque island home to two spectacular volcanoes and rich Náhuatl history. Stay at breezy **El Encanto**, on a lush hilltop farm at the foot of the mist-shrouded **Volcán Maderas** (*from $15; goelencanto.com*). —LAURA SICILIANO-ROSEN

### MORE PLACES TO SURF

**EL SUNZAL, EL SALVADOR**

Northeast of Nicaragua, lesser-known El Salvador is acclaimed for its long-riding right point breaks. Enjoy them while ensconced in modern comfort at Casa de Mar Hotel (*from $110; casademarhotel.com*). Or have it all and book Nicaragua Surf Tour's Border Blitz — 10 days of surfing El Salvador and central or south Nicaragua (*$1,700; nicaraguasurftour.com*).

**CERRO NEGRO VOLCANO, NICARAGUA**

Thanks to Nicaragua's magnificent Maribios range, opportunities abound for exploring active volcanoes, and one of them is steep and smooth enough to surf...kind of. Volcano boarding involves sledding down Cerro Negro's pebbly face on a sit-down plywood-and-plastic board, at speeds up to 50 mph (*$23; bigfootnicaragua.com*).

FROM TOP: PATRICE HALLEY; COURTESY BRIAN FINCH

Cocos Island is one point of the "hammerhead triangle."

## SWIMMING WITH SHARKS

### BEST PLACE TO DO IT
**COCOS ISLAND, COSTA RICA**

Costa Rica is well known as the most diverse eco-destination on Earth, packed with rain forests, cloud forests, mountains, volcanoes, whitewater rapids, and white-sand surf beaches. But under that pristine Pacific water lies giants: hammerheads, whale sharks, and tiger sharks — beasts bigger than your car. At Costa Rica's **Cocos Island**, scuba divers are all but guaranteed to spot the mega-sharks. A protected national park some 36 hours by boat from the mainland, Cocos is far enough from land that creatures such as mantas and humpback whales converge to play. It's also one of the few places where hammerheads will school. After the sharks mate, they are unsurprisingly bruised and wounded; Cocos is their preferred cleaning station, where barber fish eat parasites out of postcoital injuries while you watch. Sharks are plentiful year-round, and while the rainy season's surge might prolong your boat crossing from May to November, the cooler currents can also make for bigger deep-sea animals (*from $4,495 for a 10-day trip; underseahunter.com*).

### BEYOND THE DIVE

At **Lapa Rios** rain forest ecolodge on the **Osa Peninsula**, explore numerous hiking trails on 1,000 acres of rigorously protected jungle that overlooks the Pacific, and stay in luxe open-air bungalows amid the serenade of howler monkeys and macaws (*from $210; lapa rios.com*). —SARAH ROSE

### MORE PLACES FOR SHARKS

**CANO ISLAND, COSTA RICA**
If a 10-day dive charter is too much bottom time for you, dozens of white-tipped reef sharks, sting rays, and sea turtles lie in wait off Caño Island, a national reserve only 12 miles into the Pacific off Drake Bay (*$105 for a two-tank dive; costaricadiving.com*).

**UTILA ISLAND, HONDURAS**
This island bills itself as the whale shark capital of the Caribbean, where it's possible to see as many as five of the planet's most massive fish in a single site while snorkeling. Spotters watch for sea birds circling to signal that small baitfish have been herded into a ball; below them, tuna will be feeding, and following the tuna is likely to be a 20- to 40-foot, 20-ton whale shark. Utila, a paradise with few beaches, is also one of the best bargains in diving (*$25 per tank; dive-utila.com*).

**TIP:** If you must stay the night in San José, a big and charmless city, book into Finca Rosa Blanca, a Gaudí-esque boutique hotel and coffee plantation 25 minutes from the airport (*from $235; fincarosablanca.com*).

## MOUNTAIN CLIMBING

### BEST PLACE TO DO IT
**EL COCUY, COLOMBIA**

The **Colombian Andes** offer climbing at its most pristine, without a tourist in sight. Of course, the peaks of **Sierra Nevada del Cocuy** have remained untrammeled for a reason: Guerrilla factions found their remoteness ideal for hiding out and preparing for war. That started changing in 2003, when a presidentially appointed brigade began patrolling the area. Now **El Cocuy National Park**, more than a thousand square miles of mossy boulders, craggy summits, and crisp glacier ponds, has been deemed safe for travelers.

For the first time in 24 years, **Mountain Travel Sobek** is reinstating its Cocuy excursions. Its 11-day tour — one of the most strenuous in its arsenal — leaves from Bogotá. You'll then drive to El Cocuy and hike for seven hours to a cliffside lagoon. Over the next week you'll camp under the stars, see Colombia's few remaining glaciers, swim in clear mountain lakes, and enjoy the silence of truly isolated peaks (*from $5,000; mt sobek.com*).

### MORE PLACES TO CLIMB

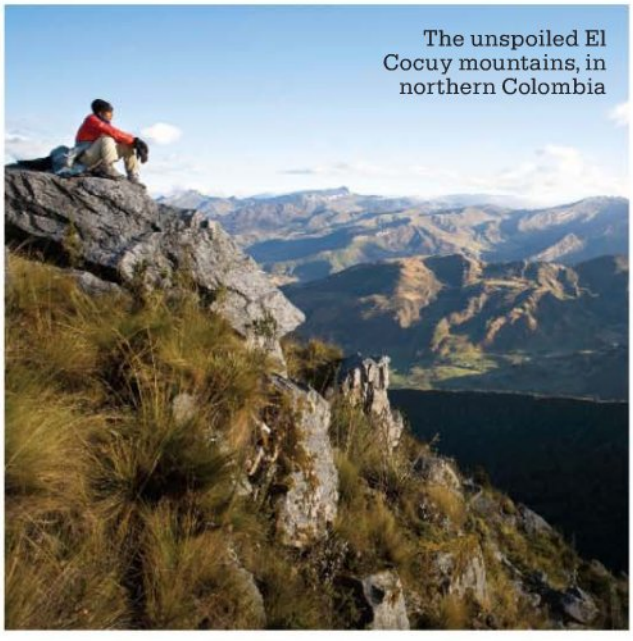
**OAXACA, MEXICO**
A hike through Oaxaca's pristine Sierra Norte mountains includes remote villages, Zapotec archaeological sites, and the chance to see jaguar. Arrange for a nine-day trek with Footloose; it will hook you up with uncrowded routes, views of rolling hills, and dinners of fresh trout served in photogenic villages (*$2,279; footloose.com*).

**CHIRRIPO, COSTA RICA**
Make your way up the 12,533-foot Chirripó via a four-day trek with Ocarina Expeditions. Be forewarned that sections of the trail are heavily forested and have pastures that turn to mud pits in rain. But it's worth it: You can see both the Caribbean and Pacific from the summit (*$625; ocarinaexpeditions.com*).

### BEYOND THE CLIMBS

Spend a few days in **Bogotá**, which throbs with salsa beats and tiny restaurants that offer chocolate *santafereño* (hot chocolate served with a bit of cheese in the mug). Stay at **Abadia Colonial house**, in the Candelaria district (*from $75; abadiacolonial.com*). —N.C.

**TIP:** Book passage on the Stahlratte, a shuttle sloop from Panama to Colombia, for a gorgeous four-day sail (*$385 with meals; stahlratte.de*).



The unspoiled El Cocuy mountains, in northern Colombia

FROM TOP: MARK GAMBA; DENNIS DRENNER/AURORA

Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula has hundreds of cenotes to explore.

**TIP:** Skip the $85 taxis at Cancún Airport — instead, exit the terminal and hang a sharp right, where you'll find buses that will take you to Tulum via Playa del Carmen for about $12.

## CAVE DIVING

### BEST PLACE TO DO IT

**TULUM, MEXICO**

The world's best spot for cavern diving is located just 75 miles south of Cancún. Bright white beaches and laid-back visitors make **Tulum**, a small windswept town most known for its Mayan ruins, the best jumping-off point for the massive network of underground caves dotting the **Yucatán**.

These caves, called cenotes — thick with tree-size stalactites and stalagmites, silvery fish, and bats — were formed after a meteor socked into the Yucatán 65 million years ago, creating vast sinkholes that eventually filled with water and became, to the Mayans, portals to the underworld. The best way to see these geological wonders is with fins and a snorkel. Book an excursion with **Edventure Tours**, run by a family who will steer you clear of the tour-bus crowds. Be sure to snorkel through **Dos Ojos**, a pair of adjacent cenotes that look like huge eyes (*$75; edventuretours.com*).

### BEYOND THE CAVES

Dry off at Tulum's **El Paraiso Beach**, a stretch of ultramarine water prized by kite surfers just a $4 taxi drive from the hotel zone. Book a cabana at **Zamas**, a collection of palapa-roof huts situated between palms right on the water (*from $100; zamas.com*). —N.C.

### MORE PLACES TO CAVE DIVE

**CAVES BRANCH ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESERVE, BELIZE**

Underground rivers flow through several of Belize's caves, and visitors can take it all in via inner tube. Hike 45 minutes through the archaeological reserve (an hour's drive from Belize City) to the Caves Branch River. From there, rent some tubes and start floating (*$45; explorebelizecaves.com*).

**CAVE OF THE GLOWING SKULLS, HONDURAS**

Used for burials in pre-Columbian times, this cave on Honduras's Talgua River was named for the roughly 200 calcium-crystal-encrusted human skulls and bones found here in piles in 1994. Local guides are on-site, but note that some caves close when archaeologists are digging.

## ISLAND HOPPING

### BEST PLACE TO DO IT

**LAS PERLAS ISLANDS, PANAMA**

**Panama City** has its charms, but the country's true treasures are found on a handful of off-the-radar islands, especially the Pacific side's relatively unknown **Las Perlas** chain (fewer than half of its 220 islands even have names).

The best way to see this part of the coast is to splurge on a chartered luxury boat from **Las Perlas Sailing**: You'll spend days anchored at deserted islands, exploring remote sandbars near where some of the world's most renowned pearls have been found. The 36-foot catamaran can be stocked with snorkel equipment and offers kayak rentals, plus plenty of fishing gear to go after trophy-size marlin (*from $180 per person per day; thepearlislands.com*).

### MORE PLACES TO CHARTER

**LOS ROQUES, VENEZUELA**

The largest marine park in the Caribbean, this chain of 40-plus islands has sugary beaches, great bonefishing, and water of such brilliant shades that it looks floodlit. The chartered sloop comes with a crew of two, plus snorkeling and fishing gear (*from $300 per person per day; los-roques.com*).

**OUTER ATOLLS, BELIZE**

Tropical Yachts offers charters complete with four double and two single cabins. Onboard scuba equipment lets you take in bewildering coral formations and the Great Blue Hole, a massive sinkhole 400 feet deep and 1,000 feet in diameter (*from $8,800 per week for eight; tropicalyachts.com*).

### BEYOND THE ISLANDS

**Panama Fishing Expeditions** has trips for both of Panama's coasts: Try the Pacific for tuna and the Caribbean for barracuda (*$185; panamafishingexpeditions.com*). —N.C.

**TIP:** Panama uses the U.S. dollar, but unlike in most of Latin America, you'll need to buy a $5 tourist card at the Panama airport.

Have an inlet to yourself at Las Perlas.

FROM TOP: JOSE AZEL/AURORA; KEVIN SCHAFER/CORBIS

# INSIDE THE GREATEST SHOW ON TV

An anatomy of the sophisticated technology NBC crews use to bring *Sunday Night Football* to life. *by* STEVE MAZZUCCHI

ALL-ACCESS PASS

IF YOU'VE BEEN WATCHING at all, you already know: Sunday night is the new Monday night. The only truly nationwide network-TV game, *SNF* kicked off the 2009 season, unveiled the Cowboys' new $1.2 billion stadium, and consistently boasts the week's best matchup. But *SNF* doesn't just feel bigger than any sporting event on television (25 million people watched the Dallas home opener) — the old *MNF* crew, part of the $600 million annual deal NBC inked for the slot in 2006, makes sure it's also superior.

"We have a seven-day workweek, just like NFL teams do, minus our bodies being put through the meat grinder," notes producer Fred Gaudelli. And that means backing up booth men Al Michaels and Cris Collinsworth with 50 percent more cameras and crew than any other regular-season broadcast, from the people operating cameras, mics, and monitors, to the miles of cable connecting it all. To keep its jewel shiny, NBC films everything in 1080i HD, highlighted by a soaring CableCam, the world's most sophisticated slow-motion technology, and NBCit, which magnifies replays to ensure that Devin Hester's feet really *were* inbounds — all cutting-edge toys at the disposal of Gaudelli and director Drew Esocoff, the broadcast's respective coach and quarterback. "We execute the game plan, enhancing critical action and, after each play, make sure that what Al and Cris are talking about is documented visually," Esocoff says.

## Here's how they get the video-game angle

Moving along with the action, this unique viewpoint comes courtesy of the **CABLECAM (3)**, which flies at 25 mph anywhere from eight to 40 feet above the field (behind the offense so it doesn't get smacked). The pilot and cameraman sit at the 50-yard line. "Panning, tilting, zooming with a joystick half the size of a cigarette — that cameraman could be the world's best video-game player," notes Gaudelli.

## ...the big play

On each snap, two of the three **PLAY-BY-PLAY CAMS (1)** isolate on a specific game-changing player, assigned in advance by Gaudelli. When the Pats play the Colts on November 15, one cam will likely follow Pats wideout Randy Moss while the other focuses on Indy defensive end Dwight Freeney.

## ...the insane slow-mo

Producers — and officials looking for conclusive replay evidence — depend on the ultra-high-resolution slow motion of the **X-MO CAMERA (2)**, which can shoot up to 1,000 frames per second. "At the Super Bowl we had three X-Mo cams," says Gaudelli. "They helped on three huge plays: the James Harrison touchdown, the Roethlisberger touchdown that was reversed, and the Santonio Holmes touchdown."

TURN THE PAGE TO GO INSIDE THE BOOTH

## *SNF* by the Numbers

**135** People working on-site on any given *SNF* broadcast

**24** High-definition cameras (three of which are robotic)

**2** Standard-definition cameras (for the game clock and play clock)

**31** Microphones (including six on-field parabolic mics)

**47** Total digital HD feeds coming into the control truck (most are live; some are replays)

**25** Miles of camera and microphone cable

INSETS: COURTESY NBC SPORTS

illustration by **Bryan Christie Design**

## ...the out-of-bounds call

The best replay shots of whether a receiver got both feet down inbounds when he snagged that pass come from the **HIGH END-ZONE CAMERA (5)**, which captures a wide-angle shot from a spot high enough to see the goal line above the goalpost's crossbar.

## ...the Telestrator shot

Cris Collinsworth needs a wide-angle view to diagram the Xs and Os with the Telestrator (actually pioneered by his predecessor, John Madden), which comes from a high-up **COACH'S CAM (7)**, mimicking the view of offensive coordinators as they direct their quarterbacks from high above the field.

## ...cheerleader closeups

Four mobile lensmen armed with **HANDHELD CAMS (4)**, shooting in crystal-clear 1080i resolution, handle shots of the benches, the crowd, occasional near-by game action, and the cheerleaders (sadly, only around commercial breaks or after a big play by the home team, and then for only five seconds). Sideline reporter Andrea Kremer grabs the closest cameraman to film updates on a suddenly gimpy LaDainian Tomlinson or Jake Delhomme's inability to throw to guys wearing the same shirt as him.

## ...Ray Lewis's nostrils

Most of the extreme player closeups come courtesy of four **END-ZONE CAMS (9)** mounted into the wall below the stands in each end — two provide wide-angle action, while the other two use 100 to 1 zoom to isolate particular players. "Those are the more artistic, NFL Films–type shots," says Gaudelli. "They show the quarterback's or running back's eyes, or a tight shot of Ray Lewis blowing smoke out of his nose, ready to attack."

## ...the high-speed chase

Two **CART CAMS (6)**, each with cameraman and driver, motor 10 yards ahead of the line of scrimmage on a six-volt marine engine. Before the snap, this camera gives the best profile shots of the quarterback. The supplier, Chapman/Leonard, also rents them for crane shots in Hollywood movies.

## ...the sound of breaking bones

NBC has six **PARABOLIC MICROPHONES (10)** around the field to pick up coaches yelling, QB snap counts, etc. They also use mics on the handheld cameras to catch ambient crowd and cheerleader noise. "If you have 5.1 sound, you can hear a whisper," brags senior technical manager John Roche. And there's no audio delay. As Roche says, "If somebody says something, you're going to hear it."

## ...all the pieces together

Director of Football Operations Tim DeKime and senior technical manager John Roche pull up in the **CONTROL TRUCKS (8)** on Thursday afternoon. There's a main control truck (where Gaudelli and Esocoff call the shots during the game), another truck for replay, one for audio, one for editing, one for the first-down line graphics system, one for the equipment-hauling Horse Trailer, and one for the 300 KVA dual-redundant generator. "A lot of cities we go to, the power is unreliable, so we bring our own," says DeKime. "It puts out enough to run 10 homes or a giant Wal-Mart for a day."

Kelly Hayes, far right, keeps his eyes on the play.

# LIFE IN THE BOOTH

## They stand to his left, but "Malibu" Kelly Hayes and George Hill are Al Michaels's longtime right-hand men.

ALL-ACCESS PASS

AL MICHAELS MAY BE a broadcasting legend, but his smooth play-by-play is only possible thanks to a team of people crammed into the small booth he shares with Cris Collinsworth: two cameramen, a lighting guy, an audio tech, a stage manager, a stylist, and, crucially, a couple of trusted assistants performing the unsung roles of spotter and statistician.

Immediately to Michaels's left stands Kelly Hayes (he, like Al and Cris, never sits during the broadcast), who first met his boss in 1979. (When Madden was still part of the team, his spotter was his elementary school classmate, legendary USC and L.A. Rams coach John Robinson.) "I did my college thesis on how TV networks covered golf, and George Hill told me Al was looking for a spotter," Hayes recalls. "We did a Nebraska–Penn State game, and I had no clue what was going on, but it worked out. I think I've worked every game Al has called since 1980, college or pro."

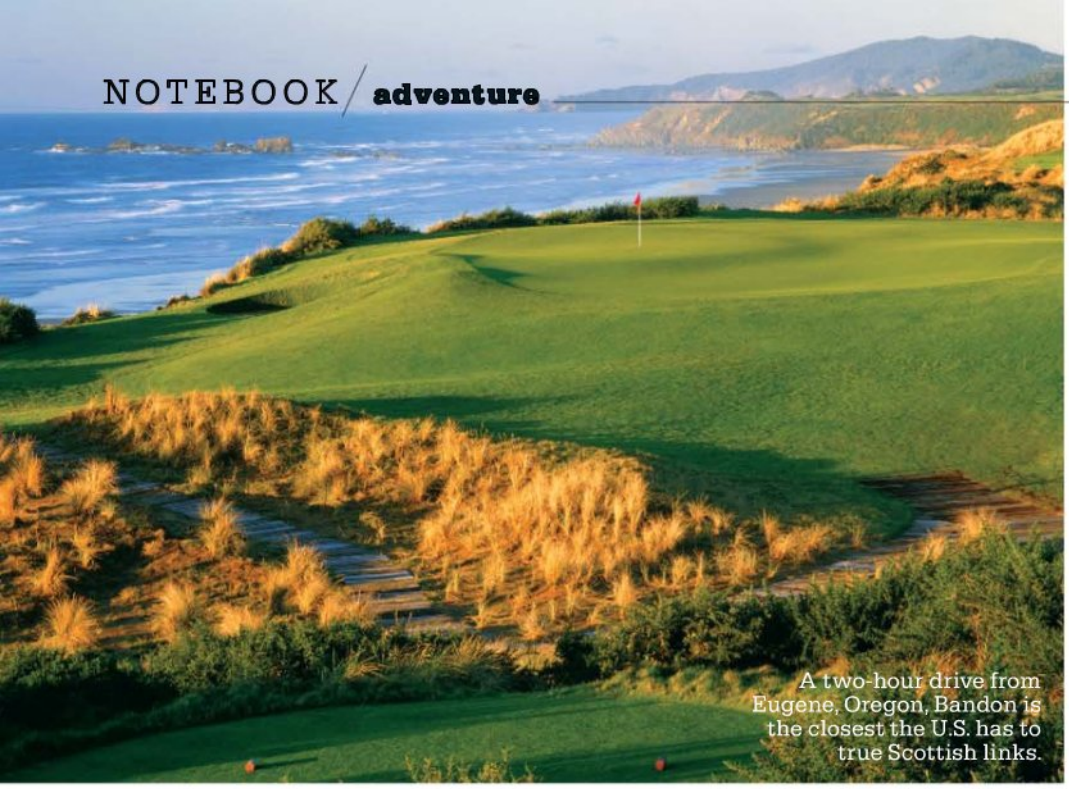
Each week, "Malibu" (as Michaels dubbed him years ago, for his hometown) prepares an elaborate spotting board with all 106 potential participants in the game. Every player gets a box with his name, number, height, weight, college, years in the league, how he was acquired, plus any particularly interesting trivia. The boxes are placed on the board in a rough formation, one side featuring one team's defense and the other's offense, and vice versa.

Hayes watches the play through binoculars, wordlessly pointing to each player involved on the board. "As the huddle breaks, I'll point to Kurt Warner and then to the two wide receivers," Hayes explains. "If the running back goes in motion, I'll point that out. When a pass is thrown, I'll point to Larry Fitzgerald as he catches the ball, and then to whoever tackles him. I'll also point to whoever made a key block. I'm all over this stuff." Busy shuffling packages, commercials, and a director in his earpiece, Michaels relies on Malibu to seamlessly report the action. "I don't think I've ever spilled a cup of coffee, which is a big deal," Hayes boasts.

To Hayes's left is stat man George Hill, who's worked with Michaels since a 1977 San Diego State–Arizona game. Hill uses a headset to talk to the graphics team in the control trucks, dictating stats that appear on a nearby monitor — helping Michaels report that, say, Adrian Peterson is four yards from another 100-yard rushing performance. He also provides instant stats for the action at hand. "If Warner completes a pass to Fitzgerald, I've got a 3x5 card up to show Al that the play went for 37 yards. I may also signal that it's Fitzgerald's first catch, or that it's Warner's fourth completion in a row." (Ken Hirdt of the Elias Sports Bureau provides historical stats from the control trucks.) But for both men, it all comes back to Michaels. "Al makes it look so easy," says an admiring Hayes. "He was born to amplify and clarify."

Once the final whistle blows, the entire team of 135 scrambles to take everything back down, pack it up, and hustle to the next city. "The trucks hit the road around 4 AM," says senior technical manager John Roche. "We may be in New York that morning, but by Thursday afternoon, those trucks have to be ready for another game in San Diego." ■

ZADE ROSENTHAL/NBC SPORTS



A two-hour drive from Eugene, Oregon, Bandon is the closest the U.S. has to true Scottish links.

# AMERICA'S BEST GOLF WEEKEND

Gather your golf buddies: For veterans or newbies, a resort on the Oregon coast offers the perfect setting for raising your game.

PEBBLE BEACH MIGHT BE THE MOST ICONIC American golf resort, Pinehurst the most historic, and Hawaii's hideaways the most luxe. But for the best pure golf experience — great courses side by side with no-nonsense amenities — make the trek to Bandon Dunes on Oregon's southern coast.

When it opened in 1999, Bandon billed itself as "golf as it was meant to be." And it is, with breezes off the ocean and the occasional squall, along with no carts, no asphalt, and astute caddies to give the feel of teeing off in the Scottish high country rather than greens just an hour's flight from Portland. But Bandon is still remote. Perched atop tall bluffs overlooking the Pacific, there is little to do but play golf, then rehash the rounds over good food and drink. The ultimate buddy-trip destination already boasts three of the country's best courses, with a fourth opening next year, but Bandon isn't only for the already golf-mad: With a first-class cadre of instructors and an enormous practice range, this is also the ideal place to get better.

Away from the courses, dining runs from simple but delicious clubhouse fare (try Grandma's Meatloaf at McKee's Pub) to fresh seafood and gourmet specials, and the bars are afloat in local wines, microbrews, and, of course, a discerning scotch selection. Bunking at the Lodge, you can practically roll out of bed onto a first tee, while the Inn and multiroom cottages for foursomes are just a few steps farther. Rooms have the basics: comfortable bed, bath, TV, and space for your clubs (*from $100*), while staff can help arrange massages, deep-sea fishing, hiking, and more. The off-season is less crowded and reasonably priced, but it's still the Northwest, so bring rain gear and extra sweaters (*greens fees as low as $75; bandondunesgolf.com*). —JAMES A. FRANK

### THE WORLD'S BEST PRACTICE RANGE:

## THE SHEEP RANCH

The folks at Bandon Dunes are hush-hush about the Sheep Ranch, but this rustic nine-hole layout abutting the resort's north end feels as if you've stepped back in time. For $100, you're met at the gate by maintenance guy Greg, led up a dirt path, and set free for the day. It's a bit shaggy, and the holes are really just suggestions, so if you want to play cross-country ("Let's hit to that flag over there!") or practice the same shot for hours and hours, go right ahead. For the best experience, take a group of at least four and invent your own games. Bandon's reservations agents can't help you: Make arrangements by calling 541-347-1636.

## Quick Guide: Bandon's Four Gems

### THE BENCHMARK: BANDON DUNES

Originally opened in 1999, Scotsman David McLay Kidd's oceanside course is defined by giant dunes, with a handful of holes hanging right over the water and hard, fast turf reminiscent of British links. The hairs on the back of your neck will rise as you play the fourth hole, turn the corner, and see the ocean for the first time.

### THE NATURAL LAYOUT: PACIFIC DUNES

In 2001, legendary course designer Tom Doak went a step further. With rippling fairways and steeper dunes, Pacific's natural beauty might be even more stunning, notably the fourth and 13th holes. But it's the course's difficulty (especially the ninth hole, with a fairway set at a sharp angle to the tee) that makes Pacific really shine.

### THE WALK IN THE WOODS: BANDON TRAILS

Designers Ben Crenshaw and Bill Coore turned inland in 2005, using the dunes to create steep elevation changes, carving through fir forests and rolling over sunken meadows. This sleeper is harder than it looks. Stop for a bit when you get to the aerie-like 14th tee, where you can look down onto the forest stretching for miles around.

### THE HISTORY LESSON: OLD MACDONALD

More than a century ago, Charles Blair Macdonald laid out America's first 18-holer (Chicago Golf Club). This tribute from Doak and associate Jim Urbina showcases the old man's genius by reinterpreting holes that influenced him. The full 18 don't debut until June, but you can get a sneak preview now on a magnificent 10-hole loop.

WOOD SABOLD (2)

# THE WORST NEWS

## A new film looks at the men whose job is to notify families that their loved ones aren't coming home.

LTC. PAUL SINOR WAS TECHNICAL ADVISER ON *G.I. JOE*, BUT THE FORMER CHIEF of the army's Killed in Action branch has never had a movie draw from his life like *The Messenger*, which won this year's Deauville American film fest. Oren Moverman's movie follows two men (Woody Harrelson and *Six Feet Under*'s Ben Foster) who bond while delivering grief.

***How do you tell the families?***
We do it right, but we also do it quickly: We break the bad news, give them condolences, tell them someone else is coming out to help them, and then get out of Dodge.

***What's the toughest part of the job?***
Depends on the individual. When a person starts to cry, some want to console and hug them, but you can't. You have to stand there and watch them fall apart. It's a vulnerable time, and you can't get in that space. You can only touch them if they're fainting.

Harrelson, as Captain Tony Stone; Sinor coaching the actors on the set (right)

***Has modern technology changed the process?***
Unlike previous wars, guys now have cell phones. So we do a communication lockdown for the next 18 hours when there's a death in a unit. Even that has a ripple effect — my son is in Iraq and he talks to my daughter every day, and when he doesn't talk to her she calls me and says, "Dad, have you heard anything?"

***How was it being the man in charge?***
I'd get the news generally within four hours of each death. For the next 15 to 18 hours I know this soldier's dead; I know that his mother is going to be given the news. I always wanted to do something, to call and say, *In a couple of hours you're going to get the worst news you've ever had. It's never going to be all right, but it's going to get better.* But I couldn't. I had to sit on it. Sometimes I was holding 10, 15 deaths a day. It was tough.

***How accurate are the scenarios in the movie?***
One hundred percent. They were filming a scene where Steve Buscemi goes after Foster and pushes him from behind, and I pulled Woody to the side and said, "If that happened, you would step in." And Steve played off of it. But you can't imagine the scenarios. The biggest thing is people fainting. Or denial — people won't let you in. Or they see you and start backing up, saying, "No, no, no, don't come in." People have gone into cardiac arrest. We've had people physically attacked, abused, and shot at. A marine had his car firebombed. That's the reality of the job. —INTERVIEWED BY NATE STOREY

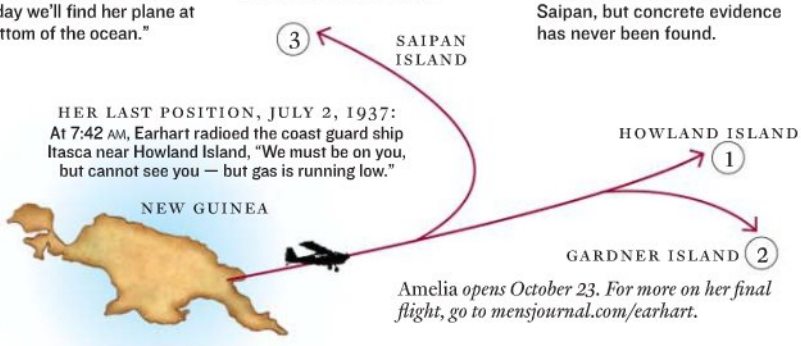
# What Exactly Happened to Amelia Earhart?

The Oscar contender *Amelia* brings new attention to the unsolved mystery of the aviator's disappearance. The most common theories:

**THEORY 1.**
**SHE CRASHED AND SANK**
"She simply ran out of gas," explains Elgen Long, the first solo pilot to circle the Earth over both poles and author of *Amelia Earhart: The Mystery Solved*. "She ended up near Howland, but several factors made her miss the island — most notably that it was six miles farther east than their old charts showed. Someday we'll find her plane at the bottom of the ocean."

**THEORY 2.**
**SHE CRASH-LANDED**
Earhart's last radio transmission, at 8:43 AM — "We are on the line 157-337...we are running on line north and south" — has led some to believe she landed on Gardner Island. Searches have turned up bits of airplane, a 1930s women's shoe heel, and the bones of a tall Caucasian woman — sadly lost long before DNA testing.

**THEORY 3.**
**SHE WAS CAPTURED AND SHOT**
"I want to tell you Earhart did go down in the Marshalls and was picked up by the Japanese," Admiral Chester Nimitz told CBS correspondent Fred Goerner in 1965 — or so Goerner claimed. Some locals said they saw Earhart imprisoned and even executed on the island of Saipan, but concrete evidence has never been found.




Amelia *opens October 23. For more on her final flight, go to mensjournal.com/earhart.*

FROM TOP: COURTESY KEN WORONER/FOX SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES (3). MAP: DANIEL REEVE

# THE BEST BIRD FOR YOUR BUCK

## Fancy chefs praise organic turkeys, but are supermarket wonderbirds actually *better*?

Heritage turkeys are gamy and delicious – but not as meaty.

IN THE KITCHENS OF America's finest chefs, a debate is stewing about your Thanksgiving dinner: Should you eat a heritage-breed turkey with an ancient lineage or an industrial bird, bred in the 1950s by Big Agriculture?

The case against the industrial bird, the Broad-Breasted White, is damning: Selected for ample cleavage and speedy growth, they are the porn stars of poultry, so voluptuous they topple over on spindly legs and so genetically engineered they have to be artificially inseminated to reproduce.

The heritage-breed turkey, on the other hand, mates naturally and can't be confined to factory pens. They actually use their muscles, making for a richer, more nuanced meat. "Heritage turkeys are more interesting to eat, with great flavors," says Bradford Thompson, former chef of New York's Lever House. "This is closer to what the pilgrims ate."

Heritage breeds are raised from strains developed in the 1800s, a marketing point that has generated explosive sales over the past decade. But after a few experimental holidays, many cooks have been disappointed: For as much as $200, you serve up a scrawny bird with minuscule breasts.

"They're harder to cook," says Thompson. "Leaner, darker, gamier — delicious, but we're not used to it. The American population is still not ready to eat gamy meat."

So gradually, quietly, celebrated farm-to-table chefs such as Blue Hill's Dan Barber, a James Beard award winner, continued carving up the Broad-Breasted White as well as popular heritage birds, like the Bourbon Red.

"I don't think a Broad-Breasted White tastes better than a Bourbon Red," says Barber, who wishes the Broad-Breasted White had never been invented — but believes that as long as it's here, we might as well eat it. "The cost difference is very significant, and I don't think it's a good idea to be arguing for what is so much more expensive just for flavor."

What's more, Barber points out, industrial turkeys are more efficient: "A Broad-Breasted White is up to 40 percent larger than a Bourbon Red. If you calculate its feed conversion [the rate at which an animal turns grain into meat], it converts better than the older breed, using less grain."

While pasture-raising Broad-Breasted Whites — an option Barber supports that lets the bird exercise and add weight more naturally, making it more flavorful — would seem to be a happy middle ground, heritage-breed advocates worry about an impending turkey Armageddon. Industrial birds are so genetically similar that they are more susceptible to new strains of disease, meaning there's no good way to stir the DNA pot to start over again if an epidemic strikes.

So which turkey is the better choice? Barber, for one, is serving both. —SARAH ROSE

## Turkeys, a Buyer's Guide

**NARRAGANSETT**
**Tasting notes:** Moist and gamy **Origin:** Rhode Island and Connecticut **Size:** Approximately 18 pounds **Price:** $10 per pound

**BOURBON RED**
**Tasting notes:** Heavy breast, intense dark meat, chewy **Origin:** Bourbon County, Kentucky, 1890s **Size:** 16 pounds **Price:** $10 per pound

**STANDARD BRONZE**
**Tasting notes:** Meaty, rich, with ample dark meat **Origin:** New York, early 1800s **Size:** 20 pounds, largest of the heritage breeds **Price:** $10 per pound

**BROAD-BREASTED WHITE**
**Tasting notes:** Tender and plentiful white meat, mild flavor **Origin:** A laboratory, 1950s **Size:** 32 pounds **Price:** Less than $1 per pound

**Where to buy heritage birds:** Select grocers such as Whole Foods carry heritage turkeys, or buy online at *heritagefoodsusa.com* or *reeseturkeys.com*.

PHOTOGRAPH: MARCUS NILSSON. ILLUSTRATIONS: JOHN T. BURGOYNE

# GOURMET LEFTOVERS

Three recipes that will put that turkey sandwich to shame.

BLACK FRIDAY, FOR US, ISN'T ABOUT SHOPPING. IT'S ALL ABOUT THE AFTERMATH of excess: nursing hangovers, patching up in-law spats, and figuring out what to do with the leftovers. We asked acclaimed chef John Besh, author of the new cookbook *My New Orleans*, how to turn those Thanksgiving extras into dishes as tasty as the Thursday spread. "I'm all about using whatever is at your fingertips," Besh says. He couldn't help us with the in-laws, but these New Orleans–accented creations will make gourmet magic out of holiday gluttony.

## Turkey Gumbo *(serves 8–10)*

THIS GUMBO IS SUCH A HIT AT BESH'S household, they've taken to cooking an extra turkey for this day-after special. While any turkey carcass will do, Besh suggests a smoked one: "And I love using lard or even rendered duck fat instead of vegetable oil."

**HOW TO:** For the roux, heat oil in a pot over medium-high heat, add flour, and allow it to slowly brown; stir constantly for half an hour. Once brown, lower heat to medium and cook slowly until it looks like dark chocolate. Add onions and stir well. After 5 minutes, add celery, bell pepper, tomatoes, sausages, and garlic. Cook for 5 minutes before adding carcass and covering with water. Allow to boil before lowering heat to a simmer, then add Worcestershire, creole seasoning, bay leaves, and okra. Simmer for 1.5 hours, occasionally skimming fat off the top. Remove carcass, add meat, and simmer for 5 minutes. Add salt, pepper, green onions, and Tabasco to taste. Serve over rice.

**INGREDIENTS**

1 turkey carcass, with all the meat removed • 1/2 cup vegetable oil (or duck fat or lard) • 1/2 cup all-purpose flour • 2 onions, diced • 2 stalks celery, chopped • 1 green bell pepper, diced • 1 small can diced tomatoes • 1 lb andouille sausage, diced • 1/2 lb smoked pork sausage, chopped • 1 clove garlic, minced • 1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce • 2 tbsp creole or Cajun seasoning • 2 bay leaves • 2 cups okra, diced • meat from whole turkey, roughly chopped • 1/2 cup chopped green onions • Tabasco • 1 qt rice

## Sweet Potato Soufflé with Sticky Rum Goo *(serves 8)*

THIS IS FOR YOUR LEFTOVER SWEET potatoes. "It's a user-friendly soufflé," says Besh. "Because of the potato's fiber, it probably won't deflate. If it rises, you're a rock star. If not, it still tastes great!"

**HOW TO:** Mix milk, sugar, and vanilla in a sauce pot and bring to a boil. Strain and cool. In a saucepan, add mixture to flour and salt and bring to a boil, stirring until thick. Pull off heat and add sweet potatoes, butter, and egg yolks. Fold in egg whites. Pour mix into ramekins dusted with egg whites. Bake at 350° for 20 minutes. For Sticky Rum Goo, combine ingredients and bring to a rolling boil, then cool and drip on top of soufflés.

**INGREDIENTS**

1-1/2 cups milk • 3 oz sugar • 1 vanilla bean, skinned, split, scraped • 3 tbsp flour • 1 pinch salt • 3 sweet potatoes, roasted and mashed • 2.25 oz softened butter • 6 egg yolks • 9 egg whites **FOR RUM GOO:** 1 lb butter • 2-1/2 lbs brown sugar • 1 cup corn syrup • 2 cups heavy cream • 1 cup rum

## Slow-Cooked Turkey Grillades and Grits *(serves 6–8)*

THIS CREOLE STAPLE *IS* LEFTOVERS; as Besh puts it, "grillades — or debris — are best made out of scraps." Spoon the meat into a sliced baguette for a classic New Orleans po'boy, or, as seen here, serve over creamy grits for a succulent brunch dish. If you're in the "what's a grit?" crowd, don't fear: It's just as delicious over pasta.

**INGREDIENTS**

3 lbs turkey, deboned and cut into 1/2-inch-thick slices • salt, black pepper • 2 cups flour • 1 tsp creole spices • 1/4 cup rendered bacon fat • 1 large onion, diced • 1 stalk celery, diced • 1/2 bell pepper, diced • 2 cloves garlic, minced • 2 cups canned diced tomatoes • 2 cups chicken broth • leaves from 1 sprig fresh thyme • 1 tsp crushed red-pepper flakes • 1 bay leaf • 1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce • Tabasco

**HOW TO:** Season turkey with salt and pepper. Whisk flour with creole spices in a medium bowl. Dredge turkey in seasoned flour and shake off excess. Melt bacon fat in a large skillet over high heat. Fry turkey cutlets, several at a time, until brown. Set cutlets aside and continue making sauce. Reduce heat to medium high, add onions to same skillet, and cook, stirring until onions are a deep mahogany color, about 20 minutes. Add celery, bell pepper, and garlic; reduce heat to medium and continue cooking, stirring often, for 5 minutes. Sprinkle 1 tablespoon of leftover seasoned flour into skillet and stir into vegetables. Increase heat to high, stir in tomatoes and chicken broth, and cook until it comes to a boil. Reduce heat to medium and stir thyme, pepper flakes, bay leaf, and Worcestershire into vegetables. Add turkey and cover; simmer for 15 minutes. Season to taste with salt, pepper, and Tabasco, and serve with creamy grits, over pasta, or on a baguette. —DAVID RAMSEY

photographs by **Chris Granger**

photograph by Jeff Harris

# MIXED, BUT NOT RUINED

## No longer second-rate, California blends are a great value.

IT USED TO BE THAT ALMOST any California wine labeled as a blend was bound to suck. Now some of the most exciting New World wines bear labels proudly announcing them as multiple-grape mixes, and it pays to understand why.

First, the background: Many European wines have been blends from time immemorial, with different regions using different traditional blends, and the bottles have always been labeled by where they come from instead of what fruit is inside. Blending, with a few exceptions, was taken for granted, and the consumer needed to know only that he liked wines from Bordeaux more than the Loire.

But then after WWII, California mass producers started willy-nilly plastering European names onto blends of mass-farmed dreck. (Think Gallo's Hearty Burgundy.) So serious California wineries began distinguishing themselves with a new transparency in labeling — just putting the damn grape name on the bottle — and Americans came to associate so-called varietal labeling with quality.

But single-variety wines have to carry only 75 percent of the listed grape; the other 25 percent doesn't have to be mentioned on the label. So even the majority of single-varietal wines are blended, for the same reason that the oldest winemaking cultures depend on blending: It makes better wine.

Different grapes bring radically different flavors to a bottle. Some work great as the wine's core, while others are so potent that you can add just a drop to get a big effect.

The two most prominent New World blending styles are known by name. Meritage depends on the five classic grapes that go into Bordeaux: cabernet sauvignon, merlot, cabernet franc, malbec, and petit verdot. The other prominent style, the Rhône Ranger wines associated with central California, leans heavily on syrah, grenache, mourvèdre, and other big, juicy grapes from the South of France. But experimentation is the rule these days, with more vintners cross-pollinating the two styles, especially in mixes of cabernet and shiraz. So next time you see a California blend, give it a try. —DANIEL DUANE

### THREE CALIFORNIA BLENDS TO TRY

**BV RESERVE TAPESTRY 2006 ($60)**
A classic Bordeaux-style blend, but with monster California character.

**CHARLES KRUG 2005 FAMILY RESERVE "GENERATIONS" ($51)** Delivers a nearly bottomless mouthful of plush fruit and spice, ideal for a pre-dinner tankard.

**MORGAN COTES DU CROW'S 2007 ($20)**
A syrah and grenache blend that's lush and floral but not overwhelming.

# Rediscovering Canadian Whiskey

CANADIAN WHISKEY HAS LONG BEEN LIGHTER AND SWEETER THAN SCOTCH, BOURBON, or rye, generally going down without a fuss. But most of us *like* a little fuss — a spark of complexity to make you straighten up and pay attention. Fortunately, a handful of boutique producers up north are now turning out nuanced, assertive whiskeys that don't belong anywhere near a glass of 7UP. Canadian whiskey is still easy-drinking — a blend of corn, barley, and rye, distilled twice, and aged at least three years in oak casks — but as these standouts prove, mellowness can be deceptive. —ROB WILLEY

**FORTY CREEK BARREL SELECT ($22)**
This whiskey's three grains are distilled in separate barrels and aged from six to 10 years. After blending, a six-month honeymoon in an old *oloroso* sherry cask gives the finished product an amaretto-like nuttiness.

**PENDLETON ($25)**
This rugged, faintly leathery, corn-heavy spirit is distilled and aged in Canada, then hauled over the border at cask strength and diluted with glacial water from Mount Hood. The result edges toward sweet, with a mellow, caramelized finish.

**HIRSCH SELECTION 20-YEAR-OLD ($70)**
The pale-straw color of this 100-percent Canadian rye whiskey belies a surprising depth of flavor — an unbelievably smooth expression of rye polished out with honey and a nutty, toasted-almond sweetness.

**GLEN BRETON RARE ($95)**
This is actually a single malt — made just like scotch, but in Nova Scotia. That said, it's whiskey, it's Canadian, and it's way too drinkable to ignore: Its sweet, bready aroma yields to a faint smokiness with hints of maple.

FOOD STYLING BY PAUL LOWE AT VIVIAN ARTISTS. WHISKEY BOTTLES: MICHAEL PIRROCCO (4)

Smith at his Ole Miss–tinged office in New York

# SHEPARD SMITH

The 10-year vet of the *Fox Report* talks about tailgating, on-air bloopers, and hangin' with Rupert Murdoch.

## Football team

I never miss a home game at Ole Miss. My dad and I are nervous wrecks during the season — you have to be a Rebels fan to understand it. The past 40 years have been a series of cataclysmic disasters.

## On-air gaffe

I said "blow job" once. J.Lo was coming back to the Bronx, and the idea was they'd rather give her a "curb job" than a "block party." What can you do? You apologize for the blow job and you move on quickly.

## Sunglasses

Maui Jim Sunset. I've got six pairs. They never fall off my head.

## Trophy

Several years ago my boss came into my office carrying this papier-mâché crown. He said, "You just dethroned Larry King! It's the first time you beat his ratings for the month!" "That's cool," I said. I haven't won since.

## Racket

Prince Diablo — the devil *should* hit the ball hard. I play a lot of tennis with friends. I have the competitive disease.

## Liquor

It used to be vodka, but I was drinking too much. Now it's Tanqueray. It's sweet and a little treeish, so I don't drink too much, which makes the workdays easier.

## Souvenir

These people were behind a shot at a mass-murder scene, holding up a HOWDY NANA & PAPA sign. It's on my office wall.

## Ideology

I try to stay away from the conservative and the liberal labels; they get me in trouble. The extremes and I don't work well together. I think people who wrap themselves up in their ideology are simply not interesting. I just want to do the news.

## Guilty pleasure

Driving my 2008 Mercedes CLK550. It's my only car, so it's definitely my favorite. I like to put the top down and go really fast on the Long Island Expressway — and not get caught.

## Home

Greenwich Village. It has every kind of person on the planet and everything's pretty relaxed. I love the freedom that comes with New York, the fact that you never have to plan anything. It's what everybody says: You can get anything at any time, do anything at any time, get anywhere at any time. There's nothing you can't do if you have the wherewithal to get it done.

## Restaurant

This little neighborhood Italian place on W. 13th Street called Gradisca. Mama comes over from Bologna every few months and sets up a table in the front window and makes pasta for a week. Everyone has their favorite Italian, but I'll stack mine up against any restaurant in the city.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: MACKENZIE STROH/CONTOUR BY GETTY IMAGES; MICHAEL PIRROCCO; KRISTEN FORTIER; COURTESY GRADISCA; COURTESY PRINCE SPORTS; COURTESY MERCEDES BENZ USA; MICHAEL PIRROCCO; STEVE GRANITZ/WIREIMAGE/GETTY IMAGES

Throughout history, VSOP brandy was the drink of choice among kings. At Paul Masson, we've transcended the VSOP tradition by blending our brandy with French Cognac and aging it in oak casks for four years, creating a rich, extra-smooth taste.

Paul Masson VSOP. Treat yourself to a regal experience.

PAUL MASSON VSOP Grande Amber BRANDY



## Historic figure

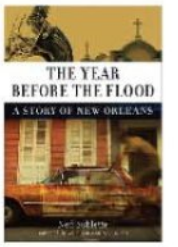
I have an MLK thing. I figure it's not about MLK as much as what he wrapped up for me. The march in Selma, the assassination in Memphis — these are places I've known well since childhood, and I saw what it did to people.

## Politician

Bush 41. He's such a gentleman. I always got the impression the most important thing to him was family. He never talked about the politics of Bush 43; he wanted to talk about getting the family back home.

## Book

*The Year Before the Flood*, by Ned Sublette. He wrote about New Orleans's colonial years and went down for research the year before Katrina hit. He writes about growing up in Louisiana; by nine he had never had social contact with a black kid. I went to an all-white school, so I understand.

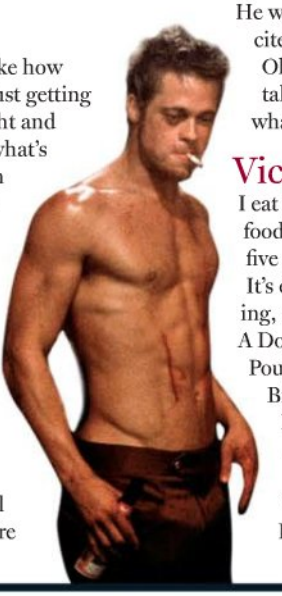



## Flick

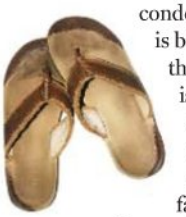
*Fight Club*. I like how everybody is just getting together to fight and not realizing what's really going on along the way.

## Anchor

Sometimes the news is offensive and there's not much you can do about it. But you have to be respectful of those who are hearing what you say. Tom Brokaw always had a really good grasp of the fact that he was coming into people's homes during the family hour.



The square, in Oxford, Mississippi



## Uniform

I've been wearing these flip-flops for three years. There's something about the freedom of shorts and a T-shirt and nobody staring at me that's good for me.

## Thing about my boss

It comes every Wednesday at 3 AM, direct deposit. I've had some nice nights out with Rupert Murdoch. He's a regular guy — for a multibillionaire running part of the media world. We were hanging out after he acquired *American Idol*. He was pretty excited; I was like, Oh, a British talent show — whatever.

## Vice

I eat a lot of fast food — three, four, five meals a week. It's easy, fattening, and good. A Double Quarter Pounder, a couple Big Macs, or a Hardee's charcoal-broiled burger. Wendy's is the Fox cafeteria.

## Escape

Oxford is my favorite place on the planet. I've got my condo there, my brother is building a home there, and my dad is there. I like the attitude. People may hate you, but they're not in your face about it the way they are in New York.

## Sandwich

I love a good oyster po'boy. There's a great oyster loaf at Bouré in Oxford.

## Advice

My dad always told me, "Don't forget where you came from." I'm a lower-middle-class kid from Mississippi. The plan was to work in Nashville and have a kid and a half and a car and a half. I never wanted to have people stare at me every night. I just like finding out what's up and telling people about it.

—INTERVIEWED BY JOHN DEVORE

FROM TOP LEFT: DON CRAVENS/TIME LIFE PICTURES/GETTY IMAGES; DON SMETZER/ALAMY; COURTESY SHEPARD SMITH (2); PAUL POPILS/FOOD PIX/GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY SHEPARD SMITH; 20TH CENTURY FOX/ZUMA PRESS

▲ **ULTRARARE OAKLEYS**
Carved from carbon fiber, the **C Six** is limited to 250 pairs. [*$4,000; oakley.com*]

◀ **FLAME TO GO**
The smokeless **Planika's Bubble** burns organic fuels, letting you take a fireplace anywhere you please. [*$1,600; planikafires.com*]

# THE WISH LIST

WHAT WE'RE COVETING THIS MONTH

▲ **STRINGED BEAUTY**
For its 35th anniversary, Taylor Guitars is issuing several limited-edition axes, including the **T3 Cocobolo**. [*$3,798; taylorguitars.com*]

▶ **ACOUSTIC PERFECTION**
**Joey Roth's Ceramic Speakers** are diminutive and pack only 15 watts, but the full-range drivers — at the back of an acoustically dead porcelain-and-cork chamber — put you right in the orchestra pit. [*$495; joeyroth.com*]

◀ **TRUNK SPACE**
The **Mayfair Steamer Secretary Trunk** makes every day at the home office feel like a vacation. [*$3,995; restorationhardware.com*]

▶ **JAPAN'S BEST SINGLE MALT**
The exquisite **Yamazaki 1984** is finally being released stateside — but only 300 bottles' worth. [*$650; suntory.com*]

▼ **BIKE TO THE FUTURE**
Beyond its stunning industrial looks, the stealth **Confederate P120 Fighter Combat** has 160 horsepower and 135 foot-pounds of torque. [*$75,000; confederate.com*]

▲ **URBAN SURVIVAL WEAR**
Waterproof, breathable fabrics cut to a tailored fit make the **Arc'teryx Veilance Field Jacket** perfect for the commute *and* the slopes. [*$1,000; veilance.arcteryx.com*]

YAMAZAKI: MICHAEL PIRROCCO

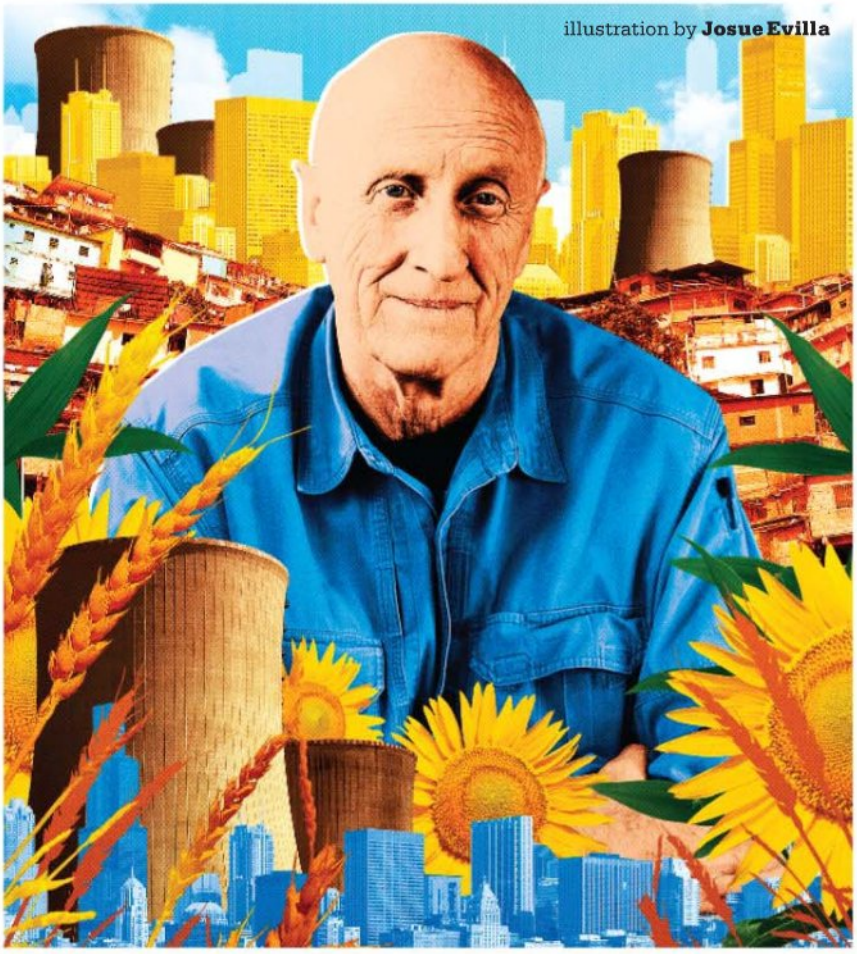


illustration by **Josue Evilla**

# THE ECO HERETIC

To save humanity, Stewart Brand calls for more nukes, slums, Frankenfood, and God complexes. *by* BRYAN WALSH

CONSIDERING HOW MUCH LSD Stewart Brand ingested as a young man, his brain is in excellent working order — although some long-term environmental allies have recently begun to wonder if he's still all there.

In the 1960s, Brand was one of Ken Kesey's Merry Pranksters, the 27-year-old in a white butchers coat driving a truck with Tom Wolfe in *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*. It was Brand — showing a talent for path breaking and networking that would resurface throughout his life — who was the driving force behind the 1966 Trips Festival. He's long since given up drugs, but those days provided the kernel of a credo: Look around. See for yourself. Keep your mind wide open.

"It's a habit that's been very rewarding, rather than just developing a story and sticking to it no matter what," says Brand, now 70 and looking back on a career that has swung from Native American studies to computers to architecture to futurism. If you're a fan of the line "information wants to be free," you can thank Brand: He said it at the original Hackers Conference he organized in 1984, a year before he co-founded the WELL (Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link), an early online community that created the blueprint for social networks. Brand didn't invent the internet; he simply embodied it, serving as a link between the Bay Area bohemian world of Ken Kesey and *Rolling Stone* (who published his 1972 article predicting the rise of the personal computer) and the venture capitalists of Silicon Valley. Later, he co-founded the Global Business Network (GBN), a consultancy that does scenario planning for governments and companies. The GBN method is shorthand for the way Brand thinks: Information is absorbed from every angle to produce conclusions he calls "strongly stated but loosely held," provocative in a way that is meant to generate further thought. In 1994 he wrote *How Buildings Learn*, illustrating how structures evolve over time, which renowned urbanist Jane Jacobs called "probably a work of genius."

But he remains best known for the *Whole Earth Catalog*, an assortment of reviews of "tools" — solar water heaters, early computers, even camping equipment — that put readers in a position to do more for themselves, with less waste. Appearing in 1968, two years before the first Earth Day, the *Catalog*, with its iconic cover of the planet from space (an image Brand credits himself with convincing NASA to release), helped establish Brand, who lives on a biodiesel tugboat in Sausalito, California, as a green godfather.

All of which makes Brand's new book, *Whole Earth Discipline*, a shocker: Brand voices what he calls a "critical mass of disagreement with my fellow environmentalists," exploding the "great myths of environmentalism" — many of which Brand once firmly believed. Nuclear power, crowded cities, and genetically modified food are all good. Pristine nature — the goddess greens pledge to defend — doesn't exist. To many environmentalists, these are pure heresies. Ever since John Muir decried the "gross heathenism of civilization," the movement has viewed technology with suspicion. But not Brand, a technophile always searching for the right tool that can improve on the world.

True fans of the *Whole Earth Catalog* should have seen *Whole Earth Discipline* coming — as Brand once gave space to organic farming as a tool to counter the ills of industrial agriculture, he now champions genetically modified crops to solve an impending world food crisis. In both cases, Brand begins with a goal — mitigating climate change tops his list — and finds the best way to get there, regardless of romantic green ideology. Brand sees himself as a pragmatic fox, in philosopher Isaiah Berlin's formulation, open to change and evolution, compared with the hedgehogs of the environmental movement, blinded by old assumptions.

"The prospects are dire enough, soon enough, that pragmatism is absolutely necessary," Brand says. "The green movement is not in love with progress, economic values, or engineering values. But we need to try all kinds of things and see what the hell works."

## Rethink cities

In the 1950s, Brand was a student of Paul Ehrlich's, who warned that a "population bomb" was leading to environmental collapse. But then population growth started to slow, partly due to something completely unexpected: the massive movement of people from the countryside, where extra kids were useful,

PORTRAIT: JASON MADARA; WHEAT: © OLEG PRIKHODKO/ISTOCKPHOTO.COM; CITY: © ELLEN MORAN/ISTOCKPHOTO.COM; POWER PLANT: © PETR NAD/ISTOCKPHOTO.COM; SLUMS, SUNFLOWER, AND CLOUDY SKY: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM; SMALL WHEAT: TOMAS BERCIC/ISTOCKPHOTO.COM

to the city, where they were a liability. "It flies in the face of the stories we've been telling ourselves about the wonderfulness of village life and rural values," says Brand. "We have this romantic view that the city is humanity at its worst, full of crime and things we like to deplore. But from the pragmatic point of view, the city looks like a great green benefit."

To Brand, who outlined the idea at a Technology, Entertainment, Design (TED) talk this year, that's true not just for rich cities, but also the teeming slums of Nairobi and Mumbai, where Brand sees the future of sustainability. As rural populations dwindle, less pressure is put on the land, and deforested areas bloom. Inside slums, residents organize, steadily moving up the ladder of opportunity — just as people did in the 19th-century shantytowns of New York and London. Crucially, they use far less energy than their developed-world counterparts. "Nothing will hold these people back," Brand says excitedly. "Any solution that says these guys have to stop having those aspirations has no shot."

But slums are also breeding grounds for crime. Many who have spent time inside them don't share Brand's optimism — George Packer, citing African megaslum Lagos, has called his views "perverse." A greater challenge is consumption: As people move to cities, they demand more than they do in villages. To meet those demands, we need more electricity.

## Build more nukes

Brand wasn't always radioactive. Like most environmentalists, Brand "went along with the notion that nuclear waste was something we should not burden the world with," he says. "Then I stopped thinking." As he learned about advances that reduce the risk of accidents, he "changed 180 degrees."

**"GREENS HAVE SINNED," BRAND SAYS. "THE MORALLY RIGHT THING TO DO IS MAKE GENETICALLY ENGINEERED FOOD."**

Brand's argument is simple: Nuclear is green because it is not coal. "For every nuclear plant that has *not* been built over the past few decades, a coal plant has been built," he says. Unlike wind and solar, Brand says, atomic power provides steady electricity — and he points to a statistic that a nuclear plant needs only one-third of a square mile to produce 1,000 megawatts, versus 50 miles for a solar array or 235 for a wind farm. Nuclear waste, he admits, remains a real challenge, but one that is relatively contained — and less scary than unrestrained climate change. "To produce a lifetime's amount of electricity for one person from nuclear, you'd end up with enough waste to fill a Coke can — albeit a very heavy one," he says.

But Brand's old friend Amory Lovins, chairman of the Rocky Mountain Institute, argues that nuclear can't compete in the marketplace, one reason why few plants are being built. "I don't know how much expertise Brand has about energy," adds Greenpeace nuclear policy analyst Jim Riccio. "I don't question his motives. I question his data."

## Let them eat Frankenfood

More controversial than his position on nuclear has been Brand's embrace of ge-

netically modified (GM) food. For many, GM crops are an outright violation of nature. To Brand, GM crops are a potential savior from global starvation, and environmentalist opposition is nothing short of an outrage. "This is a case where greens have sinned," he says. "The morally right thing to do is make genetically engineered food available to the developing world."

This issue, more than any other, highlights the break between Brand and the environmental movement he helped shape. "All technology should be guilty until proven innocent," argued Friends of the Earth founder David Brower, and the Union of Concerned Scientists has claimed that GM seeds have done little to improve crop yields. But Brand points to GM corn that requires fewer pesticides and GM rice enriched with vitamin A. Those benefits are real, Brand says, and innovation has to outpace climate change. "There's always risk," he admits. "But risk balancing is what effective environmentalists have to do."

## Blot out the sun

The key is getting the risks and the benefits right, especially the immense risk of fiddling with the planet's thermostat. Brand is confident science can solve global warming, but he also knows we've lost too much time, that technology can't move fast enough to prevent climate change from reaching critical levels. We'll need climate engineering to cool the Earth, most likely using space mirrors, or injecting sulfur or seawater droplets into the stratosphere to increase the planet's cloud cover, all to reflect sunlight into space. It's audacious — and light-years from Muir's back-to-nature longing.

But that shouldn't be surprising from a man who has always seen a planet under threat as a challenge that could be solved with the right tools. Brand emphasizes that since man first planted a seed and started a fire, we have shaped our planet. All that's changed is the frightening scale of the threat we face. Brand opened the *Whole Earth Catalog* with the half-mocking motto: "We are as gods, and might as well get good at it." He updates it to open *Whole Earth Discipline*: "We are as gods and HAVE to get good at it."

The challenge remains that while we may be good at playing gods, we are hardly omniscient, and the California optimist in Brand doesn't dwell on the possibility of something going horribly wrong. The risk of catastrophe still looms over nuclear power; we don't know the long-term effects of unleashing genetically modified seeds on the world; and as for trying to blot out the sun, even Brand admits that's a roll of the planetary dice.

"It's very painful to see my old friend being so intellectually sloppy and promoting solutions that will worsen problems that we both care about," Lovins sighs. "I can only suppose he's taken leave of his critical faculties."

Such criticism amuses Brand. "I'm a cheerful guy, so take whatever I say with a large grain of salt," he jokes. That's another quality that sets him apart from most environmentalists, who tend to feed on, he says, a "notion that history is going to hell. Greens have become interested in climate change because it's a nice big catastrophe." Brand knows his ideas may draw hostility, but his thinking has always required some ruthlessness. The Merry Prankster grew up to be a man for whom provocation never went out of style. And he isn't afraid to be wrong. He may have predicted the rise of the personal computer and laid the groundwork for Facebook, but he also warned that the Y2K bug could destroy it all.

"I've been in the public eye for 40 years, and a fair amount of the things I've said out loud I've had to unsay. I find that refreshing," Brand admits. "You have to look at inconvenient facts as an opportunity to rethink the whole damn thing — as a chance to get closer to being right." ■

A rider barrels down perilous Bray Hill, where several racers have died; TT rookie James Vanderhaar (below)

# WORLD'S MOST DEADLY RACE

Breakneck speeds. Hairpin turns. Houses only inches away. JOHN O'CONNOR checks out the insanity of the Isle of Man TT.

FOR TWO WEEKS EVERY JUNE, Noble's Hospital in Douglas, the capital of Britain's Isle of Man, brings in three extra trauma surgeons from the mainland to cope with a sudden influx of head injuries, crushed limbs, and burned and lacerated skin. The reason for the deluge is the Tourist Trophy, an annual motorcycle race that is among the most implausible sporting events in the world. It has claimed the lives of 131 competitors over the years, including 19 in the past decade.

The TT course is a mountainous 37.73-mile Brueghelian nightmare of twisting public roads lined with what the racers call "street furniture": houses, pubs, stone walls, lampposts, trees, hedgerows, and mailboxes. Spectators fill the open spaces like sand poured into a jar of marbles. Last year a cow wandered onto the course and had to be quickly tranquilized — a reminder that this is not, in any way, a real racetrack. There are no sand pits or soft tire walls lining the corners — only rock and cliffs and metal.

Above all, there is no margin for error. The winner of the first TT, held in 1907, piloted a single-cylinder moped that averaged 38 mph and had to be pedaled uphill. Today elite riders, astride slightly modified versions of the same sport bikes you'll find at a dealership, navigate these hazards at upward of 190 mph.

In the intervening 102 years, the TT has grown from a single event into a series of races played out over a week, each one broken down by engine size and classes such as Superbike, Supersport, and Superstock. The main events pay out about $115,000 in prize money. But fortune isn't what draws men (and a few women) to face their mortality on this rock 34 miles off the coast of

FROM TOP: DAVID CALLISTER; FINLAY MCKAY; NIGEL RODDIS; TONY GOLDSMITH

**"THERE'S A POSSIBILITY OF DEATH," SAYS ONE RIDER. "BUT THERE'S NOTHING LIKE GOING 190 AND BRUSHING YOUR SHOULDERS AGAINST IVY."**

England. For them the allure of the TT is primal — it is the most difficult motorcycle race imaginable. That's also what drew me and 50,000 other spectators to watch from the sidewalks this past June.

**MONDAY, JUNE 8, 10:03 AM**

Mark Miller, a former top racer in the American Motorcyclist Association series, is kicking around the paddock prior to the 1000cc Superbike event, the first of the week. He is one of the most successful U.S. riders in TT history, yet in his three tries he has never finished better than 17th. He'll compete in three races this week. (Most riders enter multiple events.) Of the six American riders in this year's competitions, he has the best chance of cracking a top 10, a feat the 38-year-old from Calabasas, California, says would almost be like taking first.

He thinks this year will be his last. An unmarried aspiring screenwriter, Miller is ready for a second act beyond racing. "There's more to life. I love art and wine and opera," he says. "I'm not willing to die for this."

But then he says things like, "This is the single greatest challenge available to me. Sure, there's a possibility of death, but there's nothing like going 190 miles per hour and brushing your shoulders against ivy," and "If you survive this race you're walking three inches off the ground for a month. It's the only race where I've ever wept after I crossed the finish line."

**MONDAY, JUNE 8, 11:15 AM**

At the starting line of the six-lap Superbike race, smoke and gas fumes cloud around the racers as they rev their motorcycles. Spectators lean over walls, dangle from tree limbs, and hang out of pub windows. The riders take off in timed intervals, barrel down Glencrutchery Road at 170 mph, and evaporate.

**1:15 PM**

Post-race, I find Miller crouched in a sliver of sunlight behind the grandstand. He finished 11th, just a half-second out of 10th place. "Refueling problems ate a lot of seconds in the pits," he explains. "Maybe the next race."

An ugly green bruise is visible on his left biceps from where he was hit by a bird during the race. "It's a fistfight out there," he says.

**1:35 PM**

Nearby, rookie U.S. rider James Vanderhaar is sprawled on the floor of his team's garage after finishing 79th of the 80 riders. A 29-year-old amateur racer and construction manager from Louisville, Kentucky, Vanderhaar trained for the TT by playing the PlayStation 2 video game *Tourist Trophy*, which replicates the course to the last hedgerow. He arrived last week and threw up twice in his helmet during practice.

"It's fucking insane," he says. "I've been within three inches of the edge of the road on Snaefell Mountain. If you go past that, you've got a fence and wire to get wrapped in, and a cliff to fall off. Honestly, I don't know if I'm willing to risk what it takes to make it here."

**TUESDAY, JUNE 9, 2:37 PM**

Despite posting his fastest average lap speed ever, 123.9 mph, Miller finishes 12th in Superstock. His last chance to reach the top 10 will come Friday.

**2:52 PM**

Vanderhaar finishes 51st out of 53 after nearly performing a 150-mph swan dive into a hedge. "There's a lot of bikes out there plastered in trees and on sidewalks," he says. "The race marshals were literally clearing a path in the debris so you could go through."

**THURSDAY, JUNE 11, NOON**

With no races today, I tour the course with Richard "Milky" Quayle, rider liaison officer for the TT. Newcomers are required to do at least one practice lap with Milky, who is uniquely qualified to instruct them on the track's perils. An eight-year veteran of the race, he is also the star of an amateur video (search his name on YouTube) that shows him crashing headfirst into a hay bale at 120 mph in the 2003 TT, an accident that hospitalized him for three weeks and marked his retirement from racing, minus his spleen.

"You do a corner here like you'd do a normal corner and it'll bite you on the ass," Milky says, nodding at a mangled road sign bearing the distinctive scars of a recent explosive impact. The offending motorcycle's remains have been swept away, but skid marks still slice across the asphalt, vanishing into a hedge. "It takes some balls to go through here," Milky continues, "and if you're too anxious" — he slaps the steering wheel — "bam!"

Our excursion quickly devolves into a historical tour of personal tragedy, turning particularly grim just before the town of Crosby, as the road dips and narrows and becomes a labyrinth of blind entries and hairpin turns. "This is where my friend Mike Casey was killed in 1998," Milky says, pointing to a narrow two-story cottage. "His motorcycle went through the roof." Then: "Alistair Howarth lost his leg at this turn in 2000," "David Jefferies died here in 2003," "I've been through that hedge over there." And so on.

From Crosby, the course sweeps west and then north toward the harbor town of Ramsey, bending south as it enters Snaefell Mountain, a 2,036-foot peak on which the road becomes particularly sinuous and the wind typhoon-grade. The right-hand curb on

DAVID COLLISTER

Snaefell is essentially a cliff, while the left-hand is a sloping meadow. There is no speed limit on the island, except in towns, and Milky pushes his silver Honda Civic to 130 mph as we chicane past dozens of cars, his fingers playing on the steering wheel as if he were working the clutch and brake of a motorcycle. Finally, we spin past Hillberry Corner, a dizzying jackknife curve where a half-dozen racers have perished over the years, and safely descend into Douglas.

"I struggle a little bit with life now," Milky admits back at the grandstand, which sits across the street from a cemetery with a memorial commemorating fallen riders. "This race is better than anything, better than drugs, better than sex. People say to me, 'It's so amazing seeing your child being born.' And I think, Yeah, *right*."

Mark Miller's bike after hitting a telephone pole; Miller moments after the crash (above)

**FRIDAY, JUNE 12, 11 AM**

A rain delay to the Senior race, the final and premier event of the week, sets riders on edge. Vanderhaar considers dropping out — "I'm not dying on this island in the rain," he says — but changes his mind. Even veteran Miller stresses his survival ambitions at the sake of a top 10 finish. "Honestly, if I go home safe, I'll be completely happy."

**2:13 PM**

The rain stops and a golden, liquid light envelops Douglas. The bikes tear out of the gates, unleashing a hellish buzzing. By the start of the second lap, Miller has smashed his previous personal record with a 125.5-mph average lap speed.

**2:32 PM**

Vanderhaar manages only one lap before his clutch fails. His race is over.

**3:35 PM**

Miller enters the pit at the end of his fourth lap. With two more to go, he is in 10th place, a tenuous three and a half seconds ahead of 11th. His pit stop goes smoothly, with none of the refueling issues that plagued him previously, but his rear tire is nearly bald.

**3:36 PM**

Miller exits the pit lane and opens the throttle wide down Bray Hill. The slope is framed by stone walls, giant maples, and multistory homes, all strung together by rabid fans, in some places just 10 feet away. The bikes howl by us, carrying with them a sudden blast of heat, materializing for a second or two before dissolving into the distance. Riders burn through this stretch at 170 mph, hitting a big dip at the bottom that causes a nauseating shudder in the backs of their motorcycles, then swing up around the bend. Four riders have died here, the last in 2002.

**3:36:15 PM**

At the top of the next rise, beyond a sharp incline called Ago's Leap, is an almost imperceptible bump in the asphalt — just a wrinkle that at normal speeds would barely register. But at 130 mph and with bald tires, it's enough to trigger a cataclysm. The front wheel of Miller's Suzuki GSX-R1000 slips, causing what riders call a "tank slapper" — a violent side-to-side thrashing of the handlebars that can quickly metastasize into full-blown unrecoverable destruction. Miller's back wheel slices out from under him, ripping the bars from his hands and snapping the bike 90 degrees. He is pitched headlong over the chassis. Later he remembers thinking, "Okay, pay attention. This is what it's going to feel like to die."

**3:36:17 PM**

Miller performs an aerial pirouette, tumbling free of the bike. There is an awful momentary silence as his chest separates from the throbbing engine it has spent the last hour glued to. As the bike scrapes downhill on its side, Miller crashes down onto the gas tank, then spins free and onto his back, bouncing along as tree limbs and sky and exploded bits of motorcycle flash through his vision. He grunts as he bounces, the bike accelerating past him with a terrible clatter, trailing oil along the cement like black blood. Miller comes to a rest at a wooden barrier 70 yards from the bump. His bike slams into a nearby telephone pole and ignites.

**3:36:25 PM**

He glances over at his bike, parts of which lie like shrapnel across the road. The gas tank, forks, and exhaust are smashed, and the rear tire has torn loose from its rim. Miller squats on his helmet and drops his head into his hands. Dazed, he sits up and looks himself over, shaking his limbs. His racing leathers are ripped, his helmet is dinged, but his only injury is a sore thumb. He stands and retrieves his helmet. Several spectators reach over the railing to hug him and say, Yes, you are alive.

**4 PM**

Brit Steve Plater wins the race, his first TT victory. Only 29 of 81 starters finish.

**5 PM**

An hour after the race ends, the TT press office reveals that a rider has died on Snaefell. John Crellin, a 55-year-old Manxman and TT veteran who had just returned from his third expedition to Mount Everest, clipped a wall, lost control of his bike, and plunged over the side of the mountain. Aside from a brief press release, no announcement is made to fans, nor is Crellin's death mentioned during the awards ceremony.

**SATURDAY, JUNE 13, 2 AM**

Riders and crew lament Crellin's death at a bar-cum-disco grief-hole in Douglas. They speak of it sadly but with a measure of resignation, implying that Crellin knew the risks and died doing what he loved. Miller is especially shaken by it. "A guy died on the same lap as my crash," he keeps repeating. "Nobody crashes on the Isle of Man and walks away from it. And here I am without a scratch." All evening, people congratulate him on his luck and ask if he'll be back next year. He's not sure. Copious hugs are exchanged. Oddly colored drinks are shoved into his hands. At one point Miller turns and says, "I felt really good out there. I was in 10th place. I was going the fastest I ever have. Why does it have to end like this?" ■

DAVID SCHLOTTHAUER (2)

# Your Logo Here

From now on I'm putting this space in my column up for sale. And why not? I'm just following the lead of the sports world, where every inch of turf, every minute of airtime, can be had for a price.

THE COMMERCIALIZATION OF SPORTS HASN'T reached its nadir, and we know this because the inevitable last step still hasn't happened — that moment when the Browns and the Rockets become the Cleveland E*Trades and the Houston Mennen Speed Sticks, with logo-embossed jerseys to match.

But we're close. A year removed from its epic collapse, the American economy is forcing the sports business to ever more desperate acts. This is the year when sports commercialization will finally go from being a cute, quintessentially American subplot (poor small-town jock makes it to the big leagues, gets the big hit in the big game, gets rewarded with his face on a Wheaties box) to a disfiguring herpes-like disease that one never stops being aware of and that finally sucks the last bits of joy from following pro sports.

It's not just the preposterous sponsorship tie-ins you see everywhere, so much so that you can literally consume them (witness the AFC & NFC Stuffed French Toast offered at IHOP — in the shape of a football!). It's not just that the major leagues have all developed awesomely specialized target-marketing techniques (visit Motherhood.com/probowl for a chance to win $1,000 in NFL-licensed maternity wear!) and found ways to team up with similarly desperate state governments to siphon monies from even-more-desperate poor people (the Dallas Cowboys stand to earn $4.2 million, or enough to pay for Pro Bowlers DeMarcus Ware and Jason Witten, via their scratch lottery partnership with the state of Texas). It's not even ESPN's nightly *Sell-some-shitCenter* broadcasts, with the endless cavalcade of Bud Light Freeze Frames and Burger King King of the Nights and Home Depot College GameDays.

It's not any of those things individually, but all of them together, hinting that the major sports are closer than ever to the commercial ideal represented by NASCAR — a sport in which a hundred thousand beered-up, suggestible southerners will gather for hours and hours on end to watch a bunch of billboards travel in a circle. I know we're getting there because I love sports but am beginning to hate watching sports. There are so many goddamn ads and tie-ins now, your skull starts to feel like an echo chamber by the end of a game — and you start inadvertently humming beer-company jingles to yourself, against your will. It is enough to make you want to gouge out your own eyeballs with a spoon and eat them raw.

The first step in dealing with this is to identify the problem. Here's a short list of the most dangerous contagions in the sports world:

## Tigeritis

Back in the '70s, commercials were just a mildly profitable diversion for a few stars, and Joe Namath was considered too self-promoting for doing both his sexually unsettling Beautymist pantyhose ad and the almost-porn Noxzema ad with Farrah Fawcett (Joe: "I'm so excited — I'm gonna get creamed!"). It took two developments to pave the way for the current problem of hideously overexposed sports megastars: one, the explosion of new media outlets, and two, the emergence of the commercial ego of Michael Jordan. Jordan in the 1990s was like the British Empire in the 1800s: The sun literally never set on his brand, as he was virtually guaranteed to be on TV somewhere on Earth, selling something made by indentured Indonesian children. Jordan was a man whose very soul was dressed in Hanes underpants, and he set the standard for future megastars such as Peyton Manning, LeBron James, and Tiger Woods, whose habit of wearing Nike apparel in ads for other products makes him the first two-holes-at-once sports marketer. If you feel you want to jam a tuning fork in your ear if you see a certain athlete's face even one more time, you've probably got Tigeritis.

ROBERT HAGADONE

## Nonspontaneous Spontaneous Celebration Disorder

New York Giants nose tackle Jim Burt invented the Gatorade bath in 1985, spontaneously, then gave it up after a year, when he thought the joke had gone stale. But the tradition was kept alive by Bill Parcells and linebacker Harry Carson, who developed the inevitable "relationship" with Gatorade Co., which gave the pair money and free Brooks Brothers suits. Next thing you know, Parcells and Carson are jamming Gatorade into every vein, performing as many as 17 Gatorade baths in a year (80 gallons of Gatorade total). The number of planned "spontaneous celebrations" has since skyrocketed, with the Gatorade bath now having to make room for the "I'm going to Disney World" shtick (foisted on humanity



illustration by **Victor Juhasz**

by another Giant, Phil Simms, who sold us out for $75,000). And that sound you heard when Terrell Owens pulled a Sharpie out of his sock and autographed his touchdown ball in a 2002 *Monday Night Football* game? That was the popping of massive PR-executive boners from coast to coast. What limitless possibilities existed if athletes could be encouraged to openly beg for endorsement contracts by acting like greedy douchebags on live national TV! Owens was rewarded with an endorsement deal, as were a host of other athletes who took the plunge into unilateral high-profile product pimping — most notably soccer player Brandi Chastain, who went from being just another struggling longshoreman-physiqued American career woman to being a multimillion-dollar sex-symbol phenomenon after she stripped to her Nike sports bra in a World Cup game.

## The Redundant Sports Commercialoma

Two different subtypes here: There are sports events that are actually commercials, i.e., that were seemingly conceived in order to sell certain products (ESPN's X Games, a transparent vehicle for transforming teenagers' allowances into summer homes for Disney executives), and there are the TV programs that have real sports themes but actually exist to sell products (the old *EA Sports NFL Matchup*, in which apparently shame-resistant grown men Merril Hoge and Ron Jaworski manipulated video-game graphics as part of what putatively was an NFL "analysis" show). This phenomenon has been developing for years. But in the same way the Nazis went from committing isolated, small-scale atrocities in the early and mid-'30s to rolling out vast factories of death, so too has ESPN now moved into the realm of sending whole busloads of athletes and agents straight to hell with this year's release of *X Games 3D: The Movie*, a feature-length film about skateboards you should buy and the insufferable narcissistic assholes who promote them. The parents who actually took their children to see *X Games 3D* — perhaps the most redundantly commercial exercise in the history of American media — should be flogged on national television, preferably at halftime of the Super Bowl.

## Creeping Logo Rot

In 2004 Columbia Pictures tried to put *Spider-Man* logos on the bases (and on the pitching rubber and home plate, before games) for some Major League Baseball contests, only to step back amid protests. Like casino boats that drive out into international waters before starting up the roulette wheels, MLB also sold helmet space to Ricoh for two games played between the Yankees and the Rays in Japan. Watch any TV sports broadcast closely and you will see that every exposed surface that is not actually on the field of play has been sold off and expertly logotyped: Most Major League Baseball teams offer around a dozen "signage" opportunities, from 26-foot rotating "behind-the-plate signage" (guaranteed to appear in that *SportsCenter* home-run highlight) to "field-level backlit signage" (revealing itself as you follow the foul ball rocketed up the third-base line) to "dugout signage" (for those innocent between-pitches shots of players joking around as they lean over the dugout railing). But of course the holy grail of sports signage is the uniform, and we took a major step in that direction this spring when the NFL permitted teams to put corporate patches on unis during practices. The NBA plans to do the same and has said it continues to "explore" the possibility of ads on game jerseys. It's only a matter of time before we see LeBron James smiling at a presser at the end of his interminable free-agency saga as he holds up his new EHARMONY .COM PRESENTS THE NEW YORK KNICKS uniform.

## Renameolalia

It was bad enough when sports franchises started selling the rights to name supposedly timeless and iconic new stadiums and playing fields to fly-by-night corporations 10 minutes from bankruptcy and/or indictment, like Pro Player and Enron and TWA and National Car Rental and PSINet, turning the arenas for pro sports into genuinely comic symbols of America's boiler-room stock-scam economy. But pretty soon the networks started selling naming rights to their broadcast infrastructure, letting companies buy everything from the strike-zone graphic ("The Amica Strike Zone!") to the electronic review system in U.S. Open tennis ("The Chase Review!") to the X-and-O analysis in NFL pregame shows ("The IBM Special Look!"). It would be one thing if we could see Mark Schlereth take a Countrywide Financial Steaming Halftime Gorilla Dump, but instead we just get this meaningless forced gibberish that makes you want to hurl your TV down an elevator shaft. I estimate we're five years away from some enterprising executive coming up with a formula for selling naming rights to the actual play-by-play. Are you ready for "Trojan Magnum third down and seven"? ■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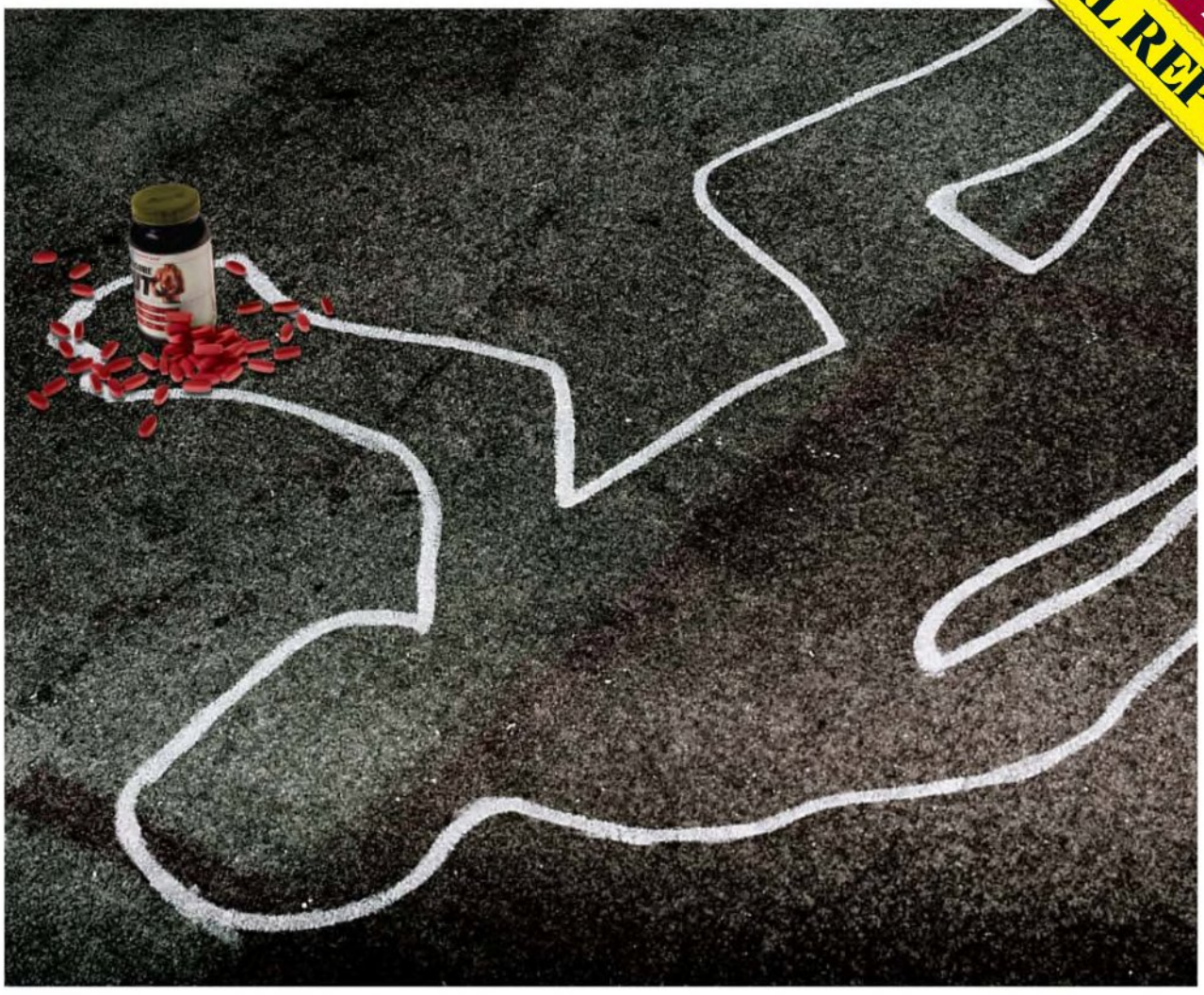
THE HEALTHY ATHLETE
SPECIAL REPORT



# THE HIDDEN DANGERS OF SUPPLEMENTS

How the multibillion-dollar, totally unregulated pill, powder, and shake industry is making men sick by the thousands. *by* VANESSA GREGORY

LAST FEBRUARY, TYRONE LAROSE'S EYES turned yellow. Then, over a two-week span, he lost 34 pounds and began to have trouble sleeping. "I wasn't eating," he says. "And my body was itching all night." These were classic signs of liver damage, but doctors were baffled. LaRose, 43, was a regular on the basketball court and in the weight room, ate well, barely drank alcohol, and wasn't on any medications. In fact, LaRose was ingesting only one thing other than food: TREN-Xtreme, an over-the-counter bodybuilding supplement he bought in a strip-mall nutrition store near his home in Southern California. For the first few months, the capsule, which claimed to be a "muscle activator," certainly made LaRose stronger. Then TREN-Xtreme started to kill him.

As it turns out, while TREN-Xtreme may have been marketed as a dietary supplement, the Food and Drug Administration says it was actually an untested drug: a powerful synthetic compound that is chemically and pharmacologically related to testosterone. In other words, LaRose was taking an anabolic steroid — the same testicle-shrinking, acne-causing stuff your high school coach warned you about. And thousands of other men likely bought similarly dangerous products in recent years, according to a class action lawsuit filed against TREN-Xtreme's manufacturer, American Cellular Labs, and Nutrition Zone, a chain of health stores that sold its products (neither of which returned *Men's Journal*'s repeated phone calls and e-mails). Taking these pills, the FDA now warns, puts consumers at risk for a number of nasty side effects associated with steroids or steroid-like substances, including stroke, kidney failure, infertility, male breast enlargement, pulmonary embolism (a blocked artery in the lung), and heart attack.

Like many who buy supplements from chain stores or es-

OUTLINE: IMAGE SOURCE/CORBIS; BOTTLES: ROBERT BLAKELEY

tablished online retailers, LaRose thought he was safe. Yet critics of the roughly $24 billion dietary-supplement industry — a vast category encompassing performance-enhancing products, as well as minerals, amino acids, vitamins, botanicals, enzymes, and organ tissues — say this is a big mistake. "There's a profound misunderstanding that the government has checked out what's in there and that it's going to be safe," says Dr. Pieter Cohen, a Harvard Medical School instructor.

In reality, the FDA doesn't have any preemptive jurisdiction over a supplement's safety or efficacy. While pharmaceuticals like prescription drugs, and even over-the-counter pain relievers, are scrutinized by teams of government physicians, chemists, statisticians, and pharmacologists, supplements are held only to the same after-the-fact scrutiny that food is. If a strain of salmonella is discovered in a batch of spinach, for instance, the vegetable is recalled only after people show up in emergency rooms. Therefore the FDA is left with the tricky task of policing products already on shelves — and there are an estimated 75,000 dietary supplements out there today. And due to the 1994 Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act, the only guarantee behind these products is the manufacturer's word. "As a result, you have an unfettered industry that's basically allowed to do whatever they want," says Dr. Gary Green, a clinical professor in UCLA's Division of Sports Medicine.

Even more troubling for consumers, it can take years for the FDA to enforce a ban after it has issued warnings. Take ephedra, the herbal stimulant aggressively marketed to athletes that is now blamed for thousands of adverse health events and more than 100 reported deaths. Until the high-profile, ephedra-linked 2003 death of Steve Bechler, a 23-year-old Baltimore Orioles pitcher, alarmed doctors got nowhere with regulators. Ephedra was eventually banned — six years after the FDA issued its first consumer warning. Removing a suspect supplement is a surprisingly slow process because the Feds bear the burden of proof in demonstrating that a substance presents significant or unreasonable risk, or that it's otherwise adulterated.

Naturally, the internet further complicates enforcement of supplements: One can log on to eBay right now and order dangerous products, such as a bottle of American Cellular Labs' VNS-9 Xtreme "strength generator," despite the fact that just months ago the FDA issued a consumer warning for the prod-

# Supplement Buyer's Guide

We took eight popular supplements to experts to determine which ones work and which are best left on the shelf.

**GOJI POWDER**
**Leave it:** This berry extract is supposed to help prevent cancer, but studies fail to prove this. It does contain vitamins, but fruits are always more effective when eaten whole. $1/ounce

**COENZYME**
**Buy it:** It's key for basic cell function, and while naturally occurring, it isn't found in a regular diet. A supplement along with blood-pressure meds can slow age-related diseases like high blood pressure. $30/month

**GINSENG**
**Leave it:** Popular in ancient medicine, ginseng has long been believed to reduce stress and boost the immune system, but scientific studies are inconclusive. However, there are claims that it reduces blood sugar to low levels, which can be bad for athletes. Just use it to spice up tea. $20/month

**VITAMIN E**
**Buy it:** Almonds, sunflower seeds, and spinach are all good sources of vitamin E, so a supplement isn't necessary if you're eating right. Still, those who are tough on their skin may want to consider it: The vitamin has been shown to help protect skin from pollution and sun damage. $8/month

**FISH OIL**
**Buy it:** The Mayo Clinic reports fish oil and its omega-3 fatty acids help lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels. Two servings of fish per week can get you the fatty acids you need, but if you don't eat fish or are trying to avoid mercury, go with a pill. $15/month

**ACAI**
**Leave it:** The fruit is a good source of antioxidants and fiber, but studies show it to be no better than, say, blueberries. And though açai contains omega fatty acids, studies have not proved its cholesterol-lowering claims to be true. $40/month

**GLUCOSAMINE/ CHONDROITIN**
**Leave it:** Glucosamine is a natural lubricant in cartilage and is thought to reduce joint pain. Studies show it may slow the progression of osteoarthritis if you already have it, but Advil is still your best bet for pain. $20/month

**CALCIUM**
**Buy it:** To consume the 1,000 milligrams of calcium recommended to keep bones dense and healthy, you need to eat about four cups of spinach or drink 3.5 glasses of milk daily. Or take a supplement with widely proven effectiveness. $9/month

JEFF HARRIS

uct and filed search warrants in its investigation of the company.

And although VNS-9 lists its active ingredient, labels can be shockingly misleading. Scientific studies have found dietary supplements laced with ingredients that did not appear on the packaging, or present in amounts wildly different from those advertised.

When swimmer Kicker Vencill unwittingly swallowed a supplement tainted with dope, it cost him a shot at the 2004 Olympics. A 50- and 100-meter freestyle and relay specialist, Vencill had been taking over-the-counter supplements in 2003, when UCLA's laboratory found 19-norandrosterone, a metabolite of the steroid nandrolone, in his urine. "I'd never heard of nandrolone," Vencill says. "I had no idea what it was." The culprit, according to lab tests Vencill had done, was his multivitamin, which was tainted with three anabolic agents in amounts sufficient to trigger a positive test.

Currently the FDA is phasing in rules to inspect dietary-supplement manufacturing sites, which could prove particularly helpful in preventing contamination cases such as Vencill's. And starting in 2007, supplement manufacturers have been required to tell the FDA about reports of serious adverse effects related to their products.

"I think that sort of stuff is fine as far as it goes," says Peter Lurie, deputy director of the Health Research Group at Public Citizen, a consumer advocacy group. "But it doesn't get at the essential problem, which is that the products don't need to be shown to be safe and effective prior to marketing, and that the burden for removing them from the market is very high."

But Dr. Andrew Shao, vice president of scientific and regulatory affairs at the Council for Responsible Nutrition, an industry trade group, says pre-market regulation won't fix the problem. The American Cellular Labs case reflects badly on the industry, he says, but "the key to getting rid of these things is stepped-up enforcement by the FDA. In the meantime consumers need to carefully read labels to make sure they know what they're taking."

**ONE CAN PURCHASE DANGEROUS SUPPLEMENTS ON EBAY RIGHT NOW, DESPITE FDA WARNINGS.**

TYRONE LAROSE SURE WISHES HE had checked into TREN-Xtreme's ingredients. It might have saved him a lot of confusion and anguish, not to mention missed work and a worried family. Before you purchase any supplement, the FDA recommends looking for a series of peer-reviewed scientific studies (rather than a single, headline-grabbing one) and staying on the lookout for code words on labels such as "tren" or "anabolic." Also, talk to a doctor, especially if you're taking a variety of products or prescription drugs. LaRose didn't mention his brief supplement use because he didn't suspect it, so he waited several anxious months as doctors struggled to diagnose him. Doctors eventually determined that the damage to his liver had triggered a blockage in his bile duct, which can be fatal.

Not all adverse health events are so dramatic, but small physical changes can also be serious. Products such as TREN-Xtreme may cause symptoms milder than LaRose's liver damage, including nausea, weakness or fatigue, fever, abdominal pain, discolored urine, and shortness of breath.

LaRose, who's now recovering nicely, has a new approach to any and all supplements: "Leave them alone. Right now, I'm just trying to rebuild," he says. "I feel a whole lot better than I did, and I never want to feel that way again." ■

## Safe, Legal Boosters the Pros Take

**EAS MUSCLE ARMOR**
MATT HASSELBECK, 34
QUARTERBACK, SEATTLE SEAHAWKS

**The endorsement:** "I lived on anti-inflammatories, but then I started taking Muscle Armor and the soreness went away. I felt my muscles didn't break down."
**Expert's take:** "It contains L-arginine and glutamine," says Joel Cramer, an exercise science professor at the University of Oklahoma. "Those compounds seem to help muscles recover."

**PROARGI9**
STEVEN NYMAN, 27
OLYMPIC SKIER

**The endorsement:** "I'm often in cold environments, so circulation is important for me. I take the ProArgi9, and it helps me warm up and feel energized."
**Expert's take:** "The main ingredient is arginine," says Cramer, "which the body is supposed to use to produce nitric oxide. That dilates the blood vessels and improves blood flow."

**MYOPLEX PROTEIN SHAKES**
CHASE UTLEY, 30
2ND BASEMAN, PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES

**The endorsement:** "I was losing about 10 pounds over the course of the season, so I wanted something I could take during games and after workouts to help me maintain my muscle mass."
**Expert's take:** "Whey protein and leucine, like that in Myoplex, are important for muscle growth," says Cramer.

**GATORADE ELECTROLYTE MIX**
LANDON DONOVAN, 27
SOCCER PLAYER, MIDFIELDER

**The endorsement:** "I generally consume a packet of electrolytes before training and games. I feel better during practice, and I recover more quickly."
**Expert's take:** "Sodium is the important ingredient in electrolytes for sweating athletes," says Cramer. "Too little can cause swelling in the brain. Taking it before games can help stop this."

FROM LEFT: DILIP VISHWANAT/GETTY IMAGES; MATHEW STOCKMAN/GETTY IMAGES; CHRISTIAN PETERSEN/GETTY IMAGES; ROBERT MORA/MLS VIA GETTY IMAGES

# THE HEALTHY WAY TO WORK

## Five relatively minor adjustments to prevent big chronic problems later.

YOU SPEND A THIRD OF YOUR LIFE TRAPPED INSIDE YOUR OFFICE, AND it's not just making you prone to carpal tunnel syndrome, sciatica, and several other crippling ailments — it's stiffening your muscles and joints, keeping you from playing the sports you love. But short of becoming a traffic cop, there are a number of simple tweaks you can implement that will make a huge difference. We tapped Cornell professor of ergonomics Alan Hedge to show us how. —JOSH FULMER

### PIMP YOUR MONITOR

To reduce eye strain, the top of your monitor should be just above eye level, about an arm's length away, and the brightness should be set to what feels "most comfortable," says Hedge. 3M offers adjustable monitor arms so you don't have to ruin your desktop's aesthetic with a stack of hardbacks (*from $80; officedepot.com*).

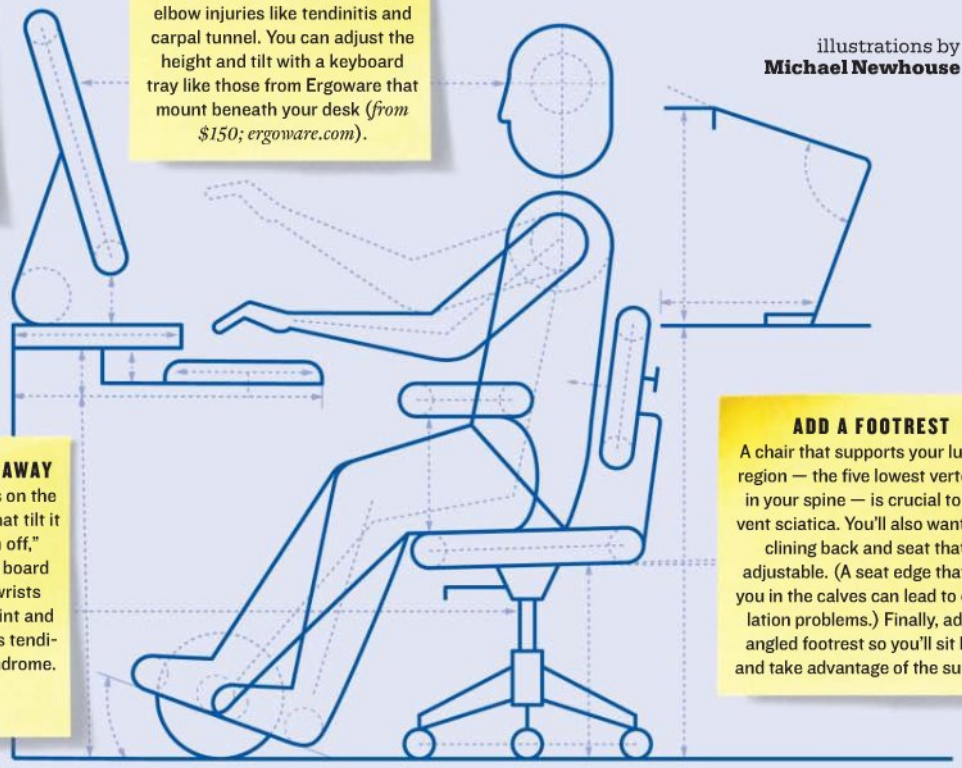
### LOWER YOUR DESK

Most desks are about 29 inches high, but your keyboard should be at 24 to 25 inches. Typing at the wrong height can lead to wrist and elbow injuries like tendinitis and carpal tunnel. You can adjust the height and tilt with a keyboard tray like those from Ergoware that mount beneath your desk (*from $150; ergoware.com*).

### TURN DOWN THE LIGHTS

Most high-powered lights found in offices reflect off your screen and cause glare, straining your eyes. Reduce overhead lighting in your office (tell HR it's bad for you) and use lamps, like the ones from the Human Solution, that allow you to put light where you need it (as when you're reading) (*from $68; thehumansolution.com*).

illustrations by **Michael Newhouse**



### TILT YOUR KEYBOARD AWAY

"You know those little tabs on the bottom of your keyboard that tilt it toward you? Break them off," Hedge says. Angling your board toward you bends your wrists back, which can lead to joint and soft-tissue injuries such as tendinitis and carpal tunnel syndrome.

### ADD A FOOTREST

A chair that supports your lumbar region — the five lowest vertebrae in your spine — is crucial to prevent sciatica. You'll also want a reclining back and seat that's adjustable. (A seat edge that hits you in the calves can lead to circulation problems.) Finally, add an angled footrest so you'll sit back and take advantage of the support.

# STAY FIT AT YOUR DESK

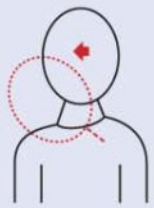
## As you sit, your body atrophies. Reverse that by doing these exercises at least twice a day.

### SHOULDERS

Shrug both shoulders. Hold three seconds. Repeat five to 10 times.

### NECK

Tilt head to one side. Hold 15 seconds. Repeat three times each way.

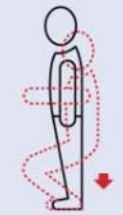


### LOWER BACK

Cross legs. Pull the top leg in for 10 seconds. Repeat three times a side.

### GLUTES

Squat from a seated position to a standing position 15 to 20 times.



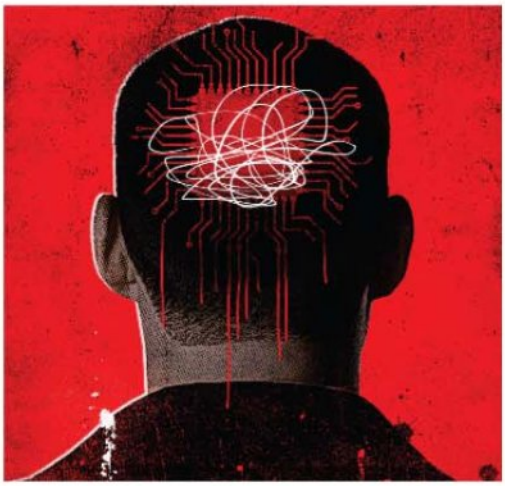
### ABS

Standing straight up, flex your abs. Hold for 10 seconds 20 times.

POST-IT NOTES: PAUL BRADFORTH/ALAMY

# BOOST YOUR MEMORY

For better recall, drop the Adderall and summon your inner Alfred Hitchcock.



LOTS OF US HAVE TROUble remembering the name of the person we just met. But rattling off the names, from memory, of more than 200 people he's just shaken hands with is a piece of cake for Ron White, a 36-year-old navy reservist and the winner of this year's USA Memory Championship. The trick, says White, is to focus your attention on what he calls the "outstanding feature" of each face in the crowd: a lantern jaw, a scar on a chin, a stubbly pate. Then things get a little weird. "Say the guy's name is David and he's got a high forehead. Because 'David' sounds like 'divot,' as I'm being introduced to him I'll imagine a murderous golf club whacking out a divot in the center of his brow." In fact, says White, the more aberrant the association, the better his recall.

"Whenever gory stuff wanders into the mind, the amygdala, a structure that mediates emotion, sends out an amplified response," explains Melina Uncapher, a scientist at the Stanford Memory Lab, unsurprised by White's tactic. An excited amygdala, she adds, "increases the probability that the hippocampus, which presses the 'record' button in your brain, will pick up the signal and register the memory permanently."

Memory starts fading around the age of 30, but when put to the test, mental athletes like White can rocket past high school students. And it's not necessarily because their brains are wired any differently. In 2002, British researchers used MRI technology to examine the brains of 10 expert memorizers, all men, eight of whom were top-ranked competitors in the World Memory Championships (a Wimbledon of the mind, held this November in London). The study found that "superior memory was not driven by intellectual ability or structural brain differences." As such, almost everyone has the ability to enhance their retention. You just have to work at it.

Instead, many opt for memory-improving drugs, which Sam Wang, associate professor of neuroscience at Princeton, calls "bad stuff." Most can be harmful, even addictive. For example, Adderall, an amphetamine, juices up the brain's reward circuitry by inhibiting the uptake of neurotransmitters such as dopamine. Monkeying with these pathways might allow one to capture memories, but it can also cause headaches and nausea. A safer way to increase memory, Wang and others say, is to eat the healthy fats found in nuts and fish, exercise regularly, and get at least seven hours of sleep per night.

Or you can follow Ed Cooke's lead. A six-year veteran of the competitive circuit's top tiers, Cooke set out to memorize all 12 books of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. (He's already got the first four under his belt.) To do this, he takes Ron White's gore technique one step further. Cooke goes on frequent walks, making gruesome associations en route. "If you were trying to memorize all of the British kings, you'd have to remember the first one is Offa. You'd want to envision masses of stinking offal — sheep's lungs, lambs' kidneys — landing on buildings and dripping on the people below."

"Walking a route is probably more effective because your hippocampus is then doubly engaged," says Uncapher. "The hippocampus is also active during unfamiliar events. That's why it's a good idea to get out of your chair and see new things. With practice, cognitive strategies could be more effective than taking a pill." —LAUREL BERGER

ILLUSTRATION: JOSUE EVILLA

Hike like an Egyptian

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INNOVATION

## Erasable Ink

Thanks to Freedom2 – a New Jersey–based company that produces Infinitink, a tattoo pigment that can be lasered away three times faster than traditional ink – late-night indiscretions are less indelible. The company claims that its "proprietary" blend looks just as good as conventional tattoo ink but without the same toxicity. (Freedom2 claims Infinitink can even be ingested!) The company says it's better for you because it's organic and leaves less scarring and irritation. Several top artists across the country agree. ***infinitink.com***

GEAR

## Winter's Toughest Machine

Concept2, the maker of rowing machines used everywhere from Gold's Gym to the U.S. crew team, has adapted its cable and flywheel technology to create the SkiErg, a new contraption intended to make cross-country skiers faster. "It's a perfect skiing simulator," raves World Cup skier Noah Hoffman. "It works the same muscles we use outside." Non-skiers can benefit from the machine too. "It's not going to build much size," says U.S. Ski Team physiologist Randy Hill. "But it can help tone muscles from your hips to your shoulders." **$730; concept2.com**

# 35

WORKOUT

## Ways to Do Push-ups

The push-up has been called the "ultimate barometer of fitness" because the act of doing one engages every muscle group in the body. And although it's the perfect exercise for anyone in a hurry, on the road, or without access to a gym, doing a standard push-up can get pretty boring after a while. Artofmanliness.com has fixed that problem, uploading and presenting YouTube videos of just about every variation there is on the push-up. Now give me 20.

**Feet-on-Wall Hindu Push-up**
So called because the end result resembles praying, it challenges strength and balance.

**Alternating Hands**
Cue "Eye of the Tiger" for Rocky's demonstration of this killer move.

TATTOO: HENRY HORENSTEIN

REAL LIFE WORKOUT

# THE PADDLEBOARDER

## How fund manager Ed McCall raises two sons, makes million-dollar deals, and still competes at the top.

FOR THE FIRST IN OUR NEW SERIES ON HOW REAL GUYS JUGGLE FAMILY, WORK, and an enviably active life, we tapped Ed McCall, a private-equity investor in California. Managing more than $2 billion in capital at work, McCall also trains and competes as a stand-up paddleboarder. One unusual key for the second-place finisher in the 27-mile Maui to Molokai paddleboard race (considered the world's most difficult): "I no longer have a spouse and likely won't. It tends to throw off my balance." But being resigned to bachelordom isn't his only secret for podium finishes. —STEPHANIE PEARSON

**STATS**

**Age:** 42
**Height/weight:** 6-foot-5, 210 pounds
**Home base:** Hermosa Beach, California, and Sun Valley, Idaho
**Profession:** Partner at Brentwood Associates, a leading West Coast private-equity firm
**Family:** Connor, age 17; Colin, age 14
**Sports:** Skiing, biking, surfing, stand-up paddleboarding

**WEEKLY REGIMEN**

**Monday:** Stand-up paddle from Hermosa Beach Pier to Manhattan Beach Pier and back (four miles, about 45 to 60 minutes). Lunchtime: I do some interval training (1 minute hard, 1 minute easy for 30 minutes) on the StairMaster or the Concept2 rowing machine.

**Tuesday:** Soft-sand run from pier to pier (four miles). Weight training at lunch. All of my weight training is done with dumbbells, kettlebells, or medicine balls and is functional training (incorporating full movements using entire body).

**Wednesday:** Stand-up paddle or surf for a few hours.

**Thursday:** Go to a sand dune near my house with about a 45-degree pitch and 200 vertical feet and do 20 to 30 laps (60 to 90 minutes). After every step forward, I take a half-step back. I can barely walk afterward.

**Friday:** Morning vinyasa flow–yoga class, then a two-mile swim in the ocean or in a pool. Friday-night beach volleyball (two-man) with a group of friends.

**Saturday:** Mountain-bike or road-bike ride (20 miles or 40 miles, respectively). Yard work.

**Sunday:** Another vinyasa class or more beach volleyball in the morning. Then I watch a game on TV in the afternoon and either do some functional weight training or some balance training on Bosu balls and balance boards.

**DIET** "I eat four times a day, sometimes five. The first meal is a smoothie (apple juice, frozen blueberries, protein powder, vitamin C, and Catie's Organic Greens) before my morning workout. It's quick energy, easily absorbed, and it doesn't take long to prepare. I need to eat within 30 to 60 minutes after I work out to maximize muscle-cell replenishment. In general, I try to eat real foods like vegetables, fruits, fish, and meat and drink a lot of water."

**VICE** "Lots of espresso. I have a quad macchiato in the morning, then a triple after my first workout. Espresso has less volume than regular coffee, so it's easy to drink it a lot. It helps get my body ramped up in the morning, but the drinks later in the day are more for mental comfort and are probably dehydrating me."

**RITUAL**

"I do cardio right away upon waking up. It gets the blood flowing, and I'm 10 times more productive after working out because my mind is clear."

**ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT**

**Seven Mountain Bike**
"I wish I could use a stock bike, because they're more affordable, but I'm 6-foot-5 and 210 pounds. Custom geometry is so key for performance and comfort; I have to go custom with a Seven. I like it for cross-training because it's low impact. It requires a more natural circular motion versus the linear movement of so many other exercises" (*from $5,500; sevencycles.com*).

PORTRAIT: MICHAEL TUREK

# ASK DR. BOB

## Advice from our in-house doc

### HIGH-ALTITUDE CURES

**Q I'm going hiking in the Andes this winter. What's the latest advice on beating altitude sickness?**

A As a medical student, I raced a classmate of mine nearly 17,000 feet up Mount Kenya a few days after arriving there. As we reached the top, we had terrible pounding headaches and blood-tinged sputum when we coughed. We got sick fast and had to descend through the night into a national park, where, in near delirium, we were chased by a buffalo and nearly trampled by an elephant. Lesson learned: When you're not used to altitude, the first rule is *go slow*. Oddly enough, studies have shown that travelers on organized group treks to high-altitude locations are more likely to die of altitude illness than travelers who are by themselves. Why? Probably peer pressure to stay on schedule. So my second piece of advice is, listen to your body and keep your own pace. Beyond that, here's a trick: If you're going for a day hike at high altitude (anything over 8,000 feet is generally considered high), do it within 24 hours of landing. You won't be acclimatized — that takes 10 days — but your body also won't be feeling some effects of sickness (headaches, vomiting) yet. That said, your breathing will be impaired, so don't pass out. If you're going for an extended period of time, there are a few drugs your doctor can prescribe. Diamox and dexamethasone can prevent illness when taken before an ascent and can speed recovery if taken right after symptoms develop. And then there's sildenafil citrate (Viagra), which has been shown to lower pulmonary artery pressure, making it easier to breathe and helping to prevent sickness. Of course, there will be certain side effects that may make it harder to climb....

### WHITENING WISDOM

**Q Do whitening toothpastes actually work?**

A Sort of. Those with the ADA seal of acceptance should temporarily remove mild surface stains. If you're looking for a more permanent solution, see your dentist, who will likely use a bleaching agent on your chompers.

### THE ANTI-AGING SHOT

**Q I know athletes take human growth hormone to get stronger, but I've heard it can be used to reverse the aging process, too. I'll turn 50 soon. Should I consider it?**

A Some athletes do take HGH as a performance-enhancing drug (though it's illegal), and some doctors do use it to treat problems like multiple sclerosis and even the effects of old age, like bone loss and muscle-mass loss. But I wouldn't touch the stuff. As a child and teenager, you produce the hormone naturally to stimulate growth; your body makes less of it when you reach middle age. Although people who inject HGH (that's the only way to get it into your system) do see positive results such as strength gains and loss of fat, they may also run a higher risk of developing diabetes and heart disease. It's cheaper and safer to keep your muscle mass up and body fat down through exercise and a proper diet that's low in refined sugars and high in fruits and vegetables.

### MICROWAVE SAFE

**Q What's the final word on microwaves? Safe or unsafe?**

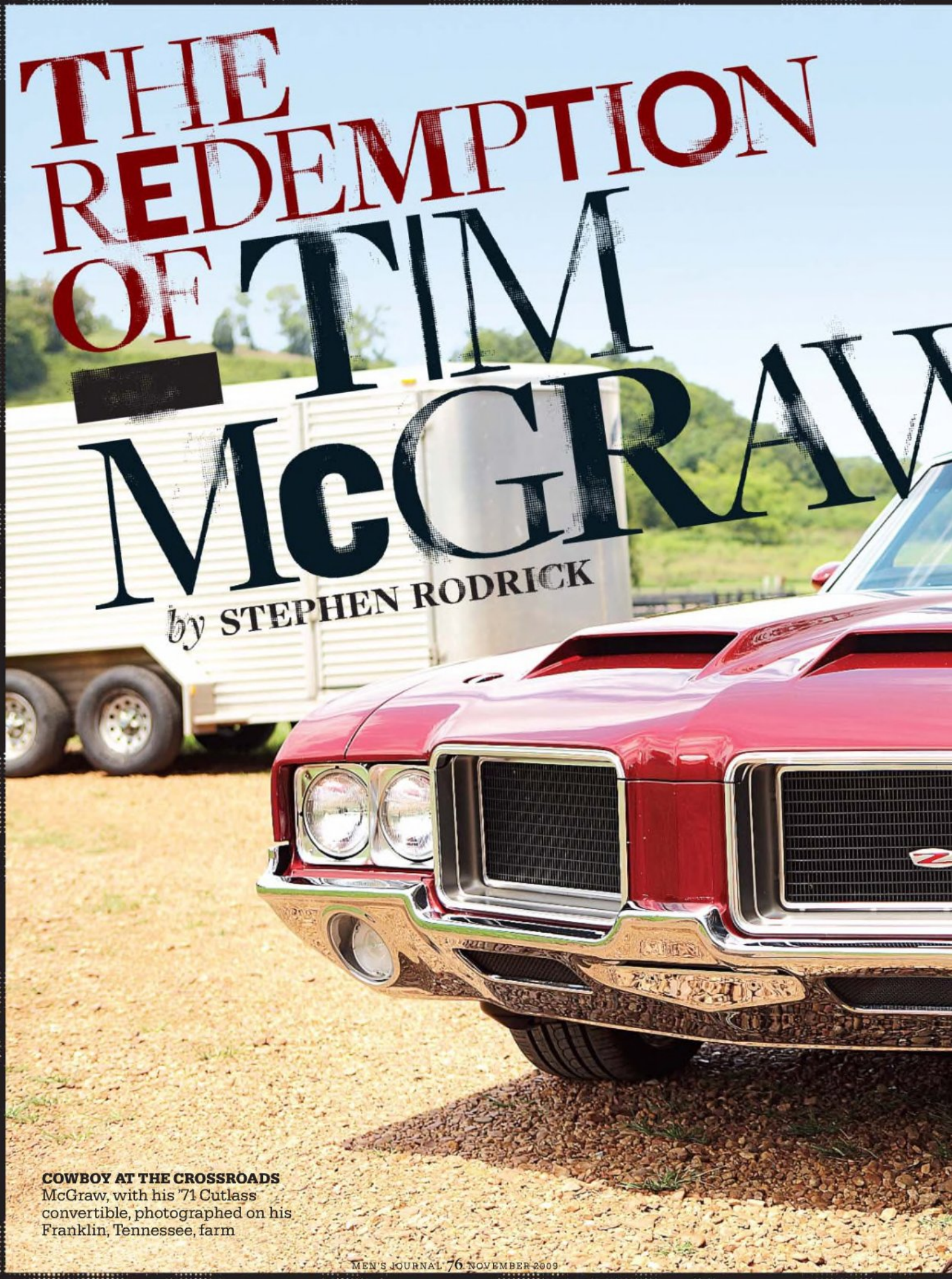
A The government ensures that microwaves sold today will not emit enough radiation to harm you. But be careful about the containers you're using to reheat your food. I avoid cheap plastic ones, since those can leach cancer-causing toxins, and instead I always stick with glass or ceramic to heat up leftover spaghetti for me and my boys.

*E-mail your questions for Dr. Bob Arnot to dr.bob@mensjournal.com.*

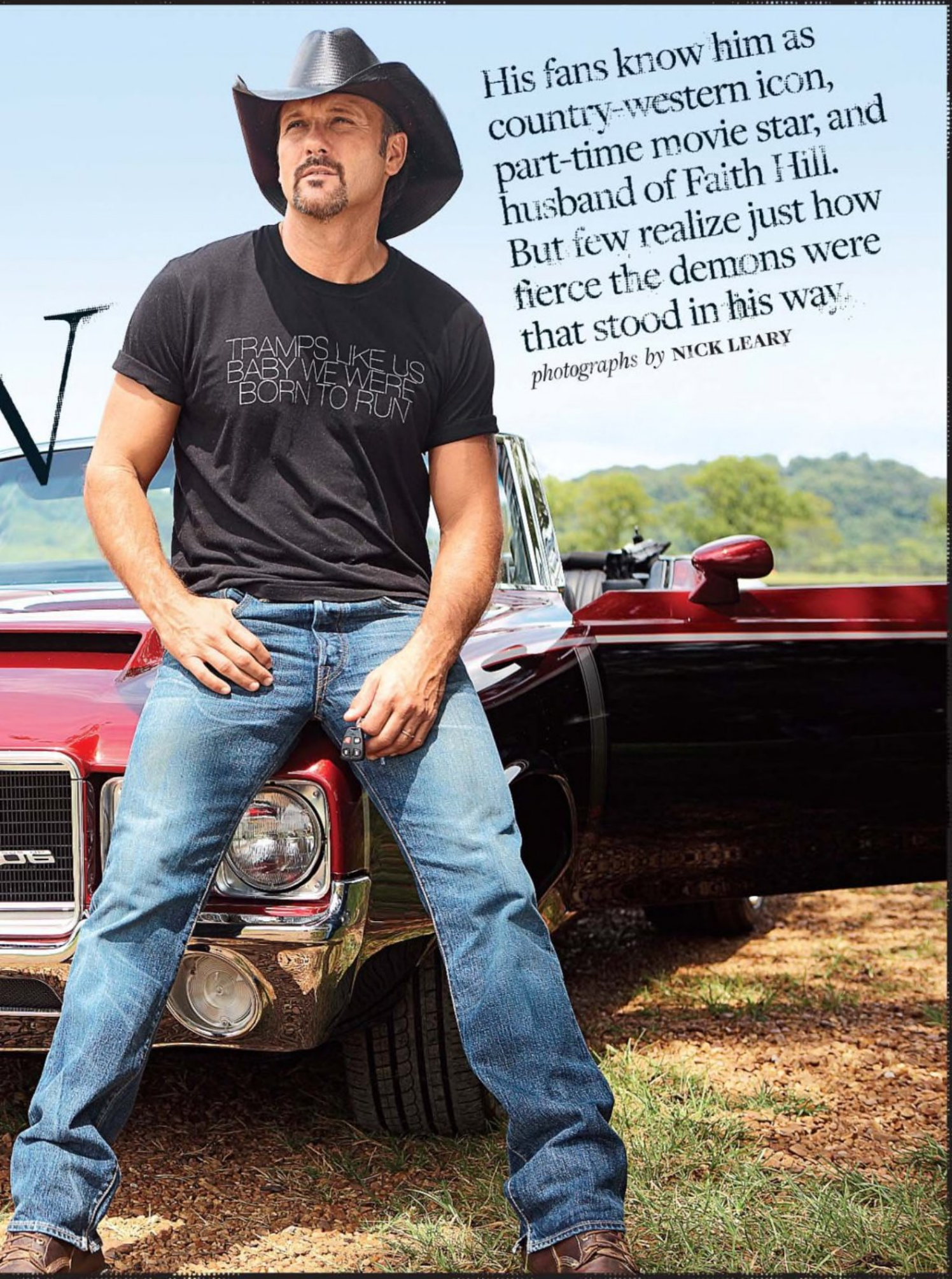
MICHAEL WARREN

# THE REDEMPTION OF TIM McGRAW

by STEPHEN RODRICK



**COWBOY AT THE CROSSROADS**
McGraw, with his '71 Cutlass convertible, photographed on his Franklin, Tennessee, farm




His fans know him as country-western icon, part-time movie star, and husband of Faith Hill. But few realize just how fierce the demons were that stood in his way.

*photographs by* **NICK LEARY**

**THE SMITHSONIAN SHOULD BOX** and preserve Tim McGraw's Nashville den for a future exhibit entitled "Early 21st Century American Man Cave." There's a cell phone that recently flashed a text reading I'M A VIKING. CALL YOU LATER. BRETT. His father Tug's 1980 World Series Championship trophy sits on a desk. Above the fireplace is a framed American flag from his navy vet grandfather. There are photos of his three daughters and Faith Hill, his wife. You may have heard of her.

McGraw has something else he wants to show me. Hanging off the back of his lounge chair is a tattered piece of blue fabric resembling an overgrown dish towel. "I've had that blanket since I was 13," says McGraw, dressed in khaki shorts, a faded T-shirt, and a Tennessee Titans cap. He gives his Rosebud an affectionate rub. "There's been a lot of ups and downs in life, good and bad. This blanket has been through it all."

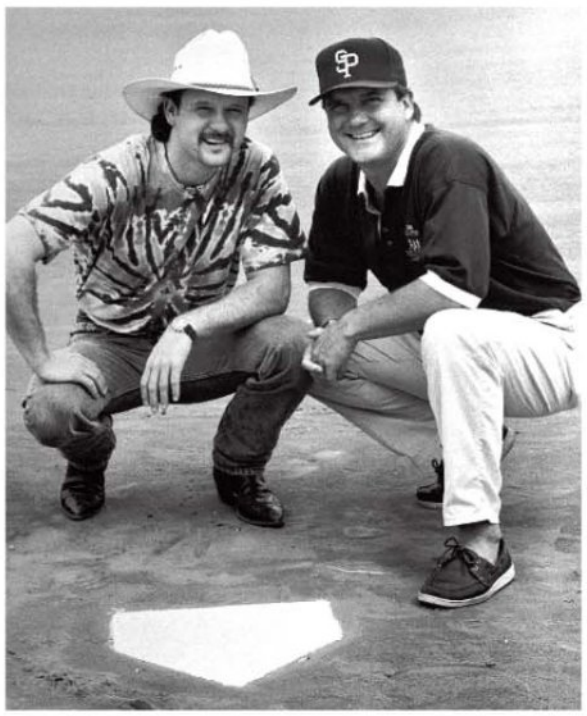
It's a stark, vulnerable statement from a once hard-drinking, punch-throwing country music icon, a man rarely photographed without his black cowboy hat. He places the blanket back on the chair carefully. Without looking up, he says, "My life has been one long dichotomy."

The happy part, you know. McGraw has 30 number one country singles and 11 number one country albums. He's married to Hill, a patient and sweet woman with 13 number one singles herself. They are the First Couple of Red-State America and print money faster than a Waffle House next to an LSU fraternity. Their joint tour in 2006–2007 was the most lucrative multi-year country tour ever, grossing $142 million.

Life is good at McGraw-Hill Industries. The couple is building a new home on its own island in the Bahamas and a new primary residence outside Nashville that has taken five years to complete. ("You drive up to the house and it looks like Europe," marvels Betty Trimble, McGraw's mother.) McGraw's best friend Hooter brings him a different car to drive every week. ("I like a little variety," he explains.) And McGraw has a new record out called *Southern Voice* and is co-starring as Sandra Bullock's husband in *The Blind Side*, his second movie about football, a consuming passion.

The couple's success allows them to have mild debates in their kitchen on whether they should fire up the family jet (McGraw is a licensed pilot) and take their daughters to Madison Square Garden so they can see Taylor Swift perform. Today, Mrs. McGraw is wearing little makeup, a peasant blouse, white pants, and Chuck Taylors. She is shy and small in person but clearly runs this show. "I don't know if we can get back in time for the girls' school," says Hill. She pours a Coke for a visitor, waiting for the fizz to die down so she can top it off.

Her husband thinks for a moment and responds carefully. "Well, I'm not saying we should or shouldn't go. I'm just saying we have the option of going."



**ABSENTEE DAD** McGraw, with Tug in 1994, says the denial of paternity still "gets in [his] kitchen."

Hill tables the conversation, gives her husband a peck, and heads off to see a friend. McGraw settles back into his recliner and chuckles. "With women you just give options and they make the decisions. I grew up in a house with just my mom and two sisters. Now I live in a house with my wife, my daughters, a female maid — and my assistant is a woman. I'm just the figurehead king. And I love it."

But now that house is empty and quiet. Outside, rain falls and the sky thunders. And I sense a change in McGraw, too. There's an unmistakable air of melancholy behind his good ol' boyness. He is 42, standing in the middle of life. He recently quit drinking. That's no small thing for a man whose earliest childhood memory is sitting in a Louisiana honky-tonk, watching the band set up, while his grandma, the bar manager, cleaned up. He sometimes finds himself onstage, stone-cold sober, wondering about his chosen profession.

"At times, you think, Is this silly?" says McGraw. His den is devoid of music-career mementos. "I'm a 42-year-old man jumping around with 16-year-old girls screaming at me. There are times when you think that you look like a clown."

I ask if he shares these doubts with his wife and fellow performer. He smiles and shakes his head. "No, I don't want her to think I think like that." He admits he doesn't talk about these issues with her as much as he should. "She's very patient with me. I don't let her in on my thought processes enough." He adjusts his blanket and shrugs his broad shoulders. "I'm trying to get better. I think sometimes she forgets because we live in a house of women and I have to say, 'I'm a guy. We don't talk about everything.'"

**BOOZE, CIGARETTES, AND** fast cars have killed many a country music hero. Tim McGraw has quit two of them. He's taking his customized Dodge Charger out to his 900-acre farm in Franklin, Tennessee. It's a trip that should take an hour, but he does it in 30 minutes. "This car has a siren, so when we get police escorts on the road I can just jump right in," says McGraw. "Faith hates that I drive fast, but she drives fast too."

Probably not this fast. He leans into a winding country road, floors it, and the Charger hits 130. He shuts it down right before a hairpin curve. "This has 700 horsepower," he shouts over the engine. "A NASCAR car has 800, but I don't have a restrictor plate."

Around the next bend is Xanadu as family farm. McGraw maneuvers the Charger past the main house and barn, past the quarter horses, past the field where he set up a *Lawrence of Arabia*–style tent for a romantic dinner and movie for his 10th anniversary with his wife three years ago. ("My wife loves foreign films," says McGraw. "But I can't remember what it was. We didn't watch a lot of the movie, if you know what I mean.") We continue past the skeet-shooting range he's upgrading so his buddy Bobby can train for the Olympics, and past the fishing pond he sometimes stocks with rainbow trout just for fun. ("They get to be nine and 10 pounds, but they die off when the winter comes.")

McGraw parks next to a black barn that holds a dealership's worth of motorcycles and automobiles. There's a $50,000 Confederate Hellcat bike that his pal Brett Favre gave McGraw on his 40th birthday. "That goes from 0 to 100 in 3.1 seconds. It can get out from under you quick. I know from experience."

THOMAS S. ENGLAND/TIME & LIFE PICTURES/GETTY IMAGES

McGraw gives a man hug to Ricky Hooter, a slender fellow in a weather-beaten cap. He's been McGraw's best friend since they met at the University of Louisiana at Monroe in 1985.

"Hooter, Hooter, where's the cooter?" drawls McGraw.

Hooter watches over the cars, supervises the farm, and provides McGraw with male company and a hunting companion when he gets squirrelly in his estrogen-rich domestic life. Hooter is a Rush Limbaugh fanatic, while McGraw keeps a giant Obama sign in his garage. They used to argue politics until the whiskey was gone. Hooter rests his rough hands on a black 1967 Plymouth Satellite. Most of McGraw's cars are classics; the Satellite seems out of place. McGraw speaks up.

"That car's Hooter's."

Hooter shyly tells the story. "My great-grandfather told my daddy when he was 16, 'Go into town and buy a car.' He bought this one. It sat for years on our farm until I was 13, and then he got it for me. I used to race it when we were in college and blew out the transmission. I didn't have any money, so we parked it in another roommate's barn for 15 years. Then Tim calls me one day and says, 'I got a new car.' And I'm like, 'Another?' But when he pulled up I said, 'That's not your car.'"

"I took it and got it completely restored," says McGraw proudly, clearly reveling in playing Papa Bear. "I gave it to Hooter, and he couldn't talk to me for two weeks because he thought he would start crying."

Hooter nods a little and stifles a mock whimper. "Please talk amongst yourselves."

McGraw switches to a Jeep and floors it down a dusty trail. He pauses at a shiny grave marker for his hunting dog Fleetwood, who died last year. He then drives across a sleepy creek. "Hank Williams used to own the farm," he says, pulling the Jeep to a stop. "One day, Hooter and I were dove hunting and a tour bus pulled up. It was Hank Williams Jr. He said he was driving by and wanted to see the old family place. The legend is that his daddy bet someone he could jump over this creek, hurt his back, and then died a few weeks later. I don't know if it's true, but it's a hell of a story."

McGraw is mindful of his country history, and at times he's overwhelmed with the thought that he doesn't measure up. I bring up an oft-repeated complaint that he rarely leaves his comfort zone musically, and he tartly responds, "I think I go outside the lines more than anyone I know in my genre. I did 'Red Rag Top' [about a couple having an abortion] and I did 'Stars Go Blue' [a Ryan Adams song]."

McGraw doesn't write many of his own songs, but he picks them carefully. From his 1992 breakthrough "Indian Outlaw," a song that pissed off Native American groups for its *F Troop* take on their community; continuing with the irritatingly repetitive "I Like It, I Love It," played to death on *Monday Night Football*; to the recent "It's a Business Doing Pleasure With You," about as clever as its title — his singles have largely been audio Velveeta. But his album tracks are markedly tougher, doing justice to the Merle Haggard line that "country songs are the dreams of the working man."

Like many megastars, McGraw is now caught between giving the people what they want and doing what he wants. His reluctance to tinker with his winning formula is partially tied to a deeper insecurity. "I find so much fault in myself, it's hard for me to condemn others for their faults. If I have to fire someone, I first think, I'm a fuckup; I don't deserve what I have. How can I fire someone? It's resulted in me getting run over a lot in business." McGraw says it isn't a secret where the feelings come from. "I was a nervous, scared poor boy who shook all the time and got beat up. It doesn't leave you feeling confident."

**"LET'S SEE IF MY MOM IS HOME," SAYS MCGRAW, DRIVING** over to a lone small house on the property. He raps on the door, but there's no answer. "She and my stepfather have a shack down in Georgia where they like to go. Give my stepfather some Crown Royal and his shack and he's a happy man. I wonder where Mom's at?"

McGraw keeps close tabs on Mom because for most of his life she's all he had. McGraw was raised in Start, Louisiana, a farming town about four hours from New Orleans. Until he was 11, he thought he was the only son of Betty and Horace Smith, Betty's first husband. Betty was a waitress and Horace was a truck driver. He'd sometimes take Tim on long-haul trips, during which McGraw first heard country stalwarts like Haggard and Charley Pride.

But Horace had a mean streak, and he started beating on Tim before his stepson learned to walk. He beat on Betty, too, but Horace seemed to have a special vicious side reserved for his son. When he was 11, Tim found out why. While looking for baby pictures for a school project, Tim stumbled across his birth certificate in a closet. Typed under "father" was the name Samuel Timothy McGraw, with "Tug" scrawled in parentheses. His occupation was listed as baseball player.

**COUNTRY'S FIRST COUPLE** "She's very patient with me," McGraw says of Hill, his wife of 13 years.

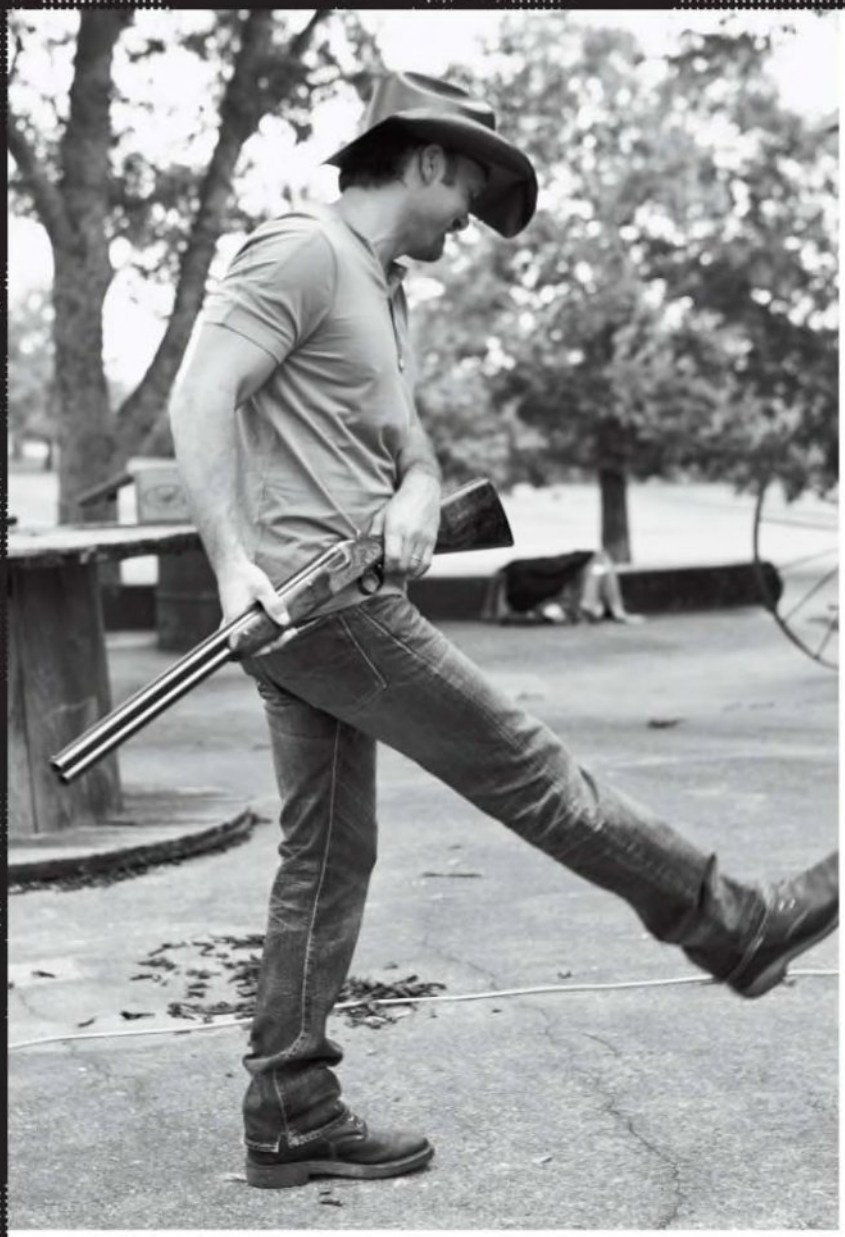
Tim more than recognized Tug's name; he was a baseball nut and had his father's baseball card from the Phillies tacked on his wall next to those of Pete Rose and George Brett. He called his mom at the restaurant where she waitressed. She got off work early, drove home, and found her son in tears. She explained to him that she had met Tug in Jacksonville, Florida, while he was pitching for a Mets minor league team. Betty lost her virginity to him and soon found herself pregnant. Her mother called Tug, who denied he was the father. Betty moved to Louisiana the next year and met Horace, who agreed to raise Tim as his own.

Tim pressed his mom to meet his real dad, who by then was married with two other children. Eventually, an arrangement was made for Tim and his mom to make the six-hour drive to Houston the next time the Phillies were in town. Though Tug was friendly, he told Tim, "I can't be a father to you, but I can be a friend.... From now on, just say we're friends." He then showed Tim around the Astrodome. "I think at that point I was just so excited about meeting him that I didn't think about the words he was saying," says McGraw. Tim asked his mom if he could change his last name to McGraw, but that didn't make him any more accepted by his dad.

"In 1980, I was watching the Phillies in the World Series with my best friend Lance," remembers McGraw. "After the game, Tug was in the locker room, covered in champagne, and he said, 'I want to say hello to my children, Mark and Carrie.' I collapsed on the couch and then went to bed. I just left Lance sitting there."

Even after that, Tim would periodically write or call up the Phillies office and leave messages for Tug. He never received a call back. Tim,

CLIFF WATTS/ICON INTERNATIONAL



a three-sport star, went through high school hoping his father would turn up at one of his games or at his 1985 graduation. It didn't happen. He got a music scholarship to the University of Louisiana at Monroe but still needed money for living expenses, so he urged his mom to contact his dad. Tug finally said he'd provide some financial support and meet with Tim again if Tim agreed never to contact him after that. Through Tug's lawyer, a meeting was set up in a Houston hotel, but the moment that Tim walked into the room, Tug saw the resemblance in his now grown son, and soon the wall crumbled.

After that, Tim would visit his father in Philly a couple of times a year and bask in being recognized as Tug's son. But Tim was starting to earn some recognition of his own. A lousy student ("I majored in fraternity"), he started playing at open-mic nights around Monroe. He built up a repertoire of 50 country covers. In 1989, he dropped out of school and moved to Nashville to try his luck at singing for a living. He took a copy of his demo to country label Curb Records, which signed him to a contract. He's been with the label since, though the relationship hasn't always been a pleasant one: *Southern Voice* was recorded two years ago but was held back when Curb released a *Greatest Hits 3* against Tim's wishes.

As Tim's fame grew and Tug's receded, the two would hang out two or three times a year, sharing beers, and now it was Tim bailing Tug out of financial straits. "A lot of the times, it was like I was the father, he was the son," McGraw says. After Tug developed brain cancer, Tim and Faith watched over his final days on their farm. Five years later, Tim's eyes still fill with tears when talking about the conversation they never had.

"When he was dying, I remember sitting there, waiting for him to say something, apologize, but he never did," says McGraw. "I got to know him, and I realized he wasn't capable."

Last year, Tim was asked to toss out the first pitch at a Phillies World Series game and decided to spread some of his dad's ashes on the mound. It didn't go exactly as planned. "As I was walking to the mound, the top of the container came off, and Tug's ashes fell out in my pocket. I was trying to put them back, but then I just emptied my pocket as quick as I could."

McGraw laughs, but he is still haunted by a father denying he was his kin for so long. For years, drinking helped Tim mask the pain. But his underlying anger still surfaced and no doubt played a part in all the brawling he did early in his career, tussling with loudmouths at his honky-tonk shows. "If there were less than three of them, I knew he'd be okay," says Darran Smith, his lead guitarist for two decades. McGraw will still yank misbehaving male fans out of the audience on occasion if he thinks they are mistreating a lady — a byproduct of watching his mom get beat up by his stepdad all those years.

He finally quit drinking last year, on his own, when he realized it was threatening to turn him into an absentee father just like his own. "My wife sometimes says I'm a lot like Tug, and it's not always a compliment," he says. "I wasn't 28 anymore. I had to grow up. I want to be home every night. I want to take my kids to school. That's what's important to me. Once I realized that, it was clear what I had to do."

His new album features the unsubtly titled "You Had to Be There," a potentially classic country weeper about a no-show dad. "I've forgiven him and made my peace with it," says McGraw. "But the older you get, the more that kind of stuff gets in your kitchen."

McGraw goes quiet for one of the few times during our time together. Then his face lights up with a realization.

"The thing is, knowing he was my dad, finding out my father was a millionaire baseball player, changed my life completely. I went from being this scared kid who didn't think he could do anything to something else. It changed the possibility of who I could be. He didn't intentionally give that to me, but he gave it to me."

> "I was a scared poor boy who shook all the time and got beat up. It doesn't leave you feeling confident."

**THE TENNESSEE SKY IS NOW CLEAR. THE BAND IS PLAYING.** The Friday-night lights shine bright. Kids toss footballs and play tag behind the stands. It's the first game for Franklin High School, just outside of Nashville. Tim's nephew Matt is the starting right tackle, and the family has turned out for his first varsity game. While their kids play behind the goalposts with friends, Tim and Faith sit on the 50-yard line surrounded by Tim's mom, his *(continued on page 128)*

SHIRT BY LOONSTATE. HIS OWN HAT, JEANS, AND BOOTS

# I AM BIRDMAN, HEAR ME ROAR

Long before extreme sports, there was the Birdman race. The Rapu Nui tribesmen of Easter Island braved perilous cliff dives and shark-infested waters in an anything-goes pursuit of glory. **Bucky McMahon** tries to re-create this proto–adventure race and escape with his dignity intact.

THE FIRST TIME I SAW ORONGO, THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE OF THE Easter Island Birdman cult, the hair on the back of my neck bristled with acrophobia and awe. It had taken our tour group all afternoon to hike to the top of Rano Kau volcano, hoofing it single file along the knife-edge rim trail to where it broadened and flattened at the cliffs of Orongo. Orongo the Bizarro! Stonehenge for the Unhinged! The grassy plateau, studded with obsessively etched boulders, seemed precariously perched between the interior crater and a thousand-foot drop to the crashing Polynesian surf. In the fading light we admired the hundreds of petroglyphs carved by the Rapa Nui (as Easter Islanders call themselves and their island), picking out the depictions of gods and heroes and oversize vaginas.

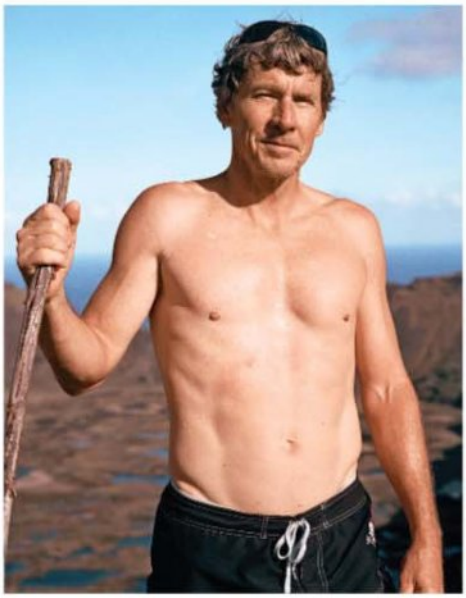
"These are called *komari*," said our Rapa Nui guide, Nicolas, pointing to the unmistakable labial shapes — Stone Age bathroom graffiti. And the googly-eyed dude with the pendulous nose? That was Make Make, the creator. He was etched everywhere too, a Rapa Nui Kilroy. Clustered at the cliff's edge were the Birdmen themselves, high reliefs of plump little anthropomorphic fellows with beaked heads and praying hands, who seemed to wince at the might and magnitude of a fearsome universe — and certainly fearsome events

*photographs by* **JOSHUA PAUL** *illustrations by* **ROLAND SARKANY**

had occurred on the unfortunate island.

Those praying figures, Nicolas explained, represented the winners of the annual Birdman race, a sacred ritual that ingeniously married politics and religion with the kind of hysteria and absurd rules usually reserved for Japanese game shows. We'd already picked up the gist of the yarn from the standard National Park information displays: the dates, from the mid-17th century to 1867, that bracketed the Birdman cult, and the purpose of the race, which was to choose a new king. As we gathered around him, Nicolas explained how every austral spring, the Rapa Nui of yore would troop to Orongo to await the return of the great flocks of succulent migratory terns that nested on offshore islets. These were hard times, post-societal collapse, and while the Rapa Nui were not exactly starving, their diet had become monotonous in the extreme by winter's end — yams, yams, and more yams. Their trip to Orongo was the climax of a weeks-long party of pure anticipation. You can imagine everyone salivating for protein as they kept watch on the blue horizon.

And then, Make Make willing, here came the birds, in their screeching multitudes, wheeling around their nesting grounds on the three islets lined up in a row below Orongo. The dancing and chanting would've risen to an ecstatic frenzy, everyone whacked in a Birdman trance. Then the reigning Birdman king stepped forth, flanked by his priests. He would be impressively painted, bizarrely shaved. He'd hold up a hand, a hand so imbued with spiritual power that he touched nothing with it all year and grew the nails till they curled like claws. Then the hand dropped. "Go!" commanded the king. And they went — everyone willing to risk it all — over the cliff and into the sea, thrashing like mad for Motu Nui, the largest and farthest of the three islets. To win you had to snatch up the first sooty tern egg of the year and make it back to Orongo, egg intact.



**HOPU WANNABE** The author on Rano Kau

"There were no rules once the race started," Nicolas told us, warming to the darker aspects. "You could drown the one with the egg, yes. He could be hit on the head with a rock and killed. Or very simple, you break the egg of the guy and go back for your own."

The way Nicolas told it, the Birdman competition was a balls-to-the-wall biathlon, a proto-extreme sports race. I was fixated on the climbing portion — the steep cliff and the thousand-foot drop. Did they really go straight down the hairy bastard?

"Yes, most did," Nicolas said. "Some would go a longer way" — he gestured toward the crater rim beyond Orongo, where it dipped down some hundreds of feet to a saddle and a collapsed slope of rubble, a tempting chicken route — "but they lost time."

And *mana*, I figured, the great intangible good of any gratuitous enterprise. The Rapa Nui were all about mana. Mana was success; mana was confidence. It was their money, metaphysically conceived: a spiritual bank account.

"The only thing was to be first back with the egg. Then you became Birdman, the king for the year."

"Tangata Manu," said one of us. So the display boards said.

"Yes," the guide nodded. "And you would marry the most desirable woman on the island, of course. The woman with the biggest clitoris."

All eyebrows rose. Excuse me?

"We ought to do it!" I said.

All eyebrows turned to me.

The guide smiled at my bravado but shook his head. "No, the rocks are sharp. You will bleed in the water. And there are many sharks."

I glanced around at our group for support. Anyone? They were game enough hikers, but landlubbers at heart. And our tour was a tightly scheduled affair, with no wiggle room for spontaneous risk taking. I ended up going home with what seemed a good deal of knowledge, but very little mana.

THE BIRDMAN STUCK IN MY CRAW. THE VERY WORD *Orongo* resounded like a gong in my brain, going, "Do it! Do it!" It was as if, having rashly spoken, I'd been cursed by Make Make to return and confront the cliffs of Rano Kau and the sharks of Motu Nui, or face life as a komari — which is to say, a big pussy.

What frustrated especially was that, despite the fear factor, the Birdman race combined two of my favorite activities: a kind of advanced beachcombing/rock scrambling/putzing around rugged coastlines, and battling out to sea through pounding surf, which I'm far more capable of than actually surfing. I'm something of an anthropology buff as well, happy to plod through a tome like *Tristes Tropiques* or *The Golden Bough*, pondering mankind's eternal quest to please itself while propitiating the great and vengeful Unknown.

I nursed my case of coulda-shoulda-wouldas at the library and on the Web, battening down the basics I'd learned on the tour. Easter Island is famous for three things: its remote location, about equidistant from Tahiti and Chile (which governs the island) and smack in the middle of a peculiarly vacant expanse of Pacific; its monumental statuary, the giant stone-head *moai* (much better known than the etched petroglyphs on Orongo); and the man-made environmental disaster of imprudent arboreal harvesting that rendered the island treeless three centuries ago, as it practically is to this day.

It was a near miracle the ancient Polynesians found the speck, but once they arrived, circa A.D. 400 to 600, they never left and entertained no visitors for a thousand years, providing anthropology a kind of petri dish of human culture in isolation. Without the benefits of contact with other peoples — some Other to learn from, someone foreign to fight — how weird can we get?

In their solitude, the Rapa Nui developed a monomania for statue carving, a craze they ultimately could not control. They erected hundreds of moai on seaside altars, each an Ozymandias facing inland and glaring at the mortals. Hundreds more completed moai accumulated at the principal quarry, awaiting delivery. Though they never exhausted their enthusiasm for honoring aristocrats, the Rapa Nui did run out of lumber to make log rollers, having cut down all the island's trees for the enterprise, and the moai bubble burst. Soon thereafter it was *Mad Max* time, the ecology buggered, society in shambles, the moai all knocked down by angry mobs, half the people hiding in caves, the other half hunting them with rocks. Out of the chaos of cannibalism and chicken hoarding arose the Birdman, a brightly feathered phoenix of hope, a last chance to get their mana back.

In hopes of getting a little of my own mana back, I read everything I could find, highbrow and low, from the accounts of the seafaring explorers to the sardonic lyrics of "Oh Bring Back the Egg Unbroken,"

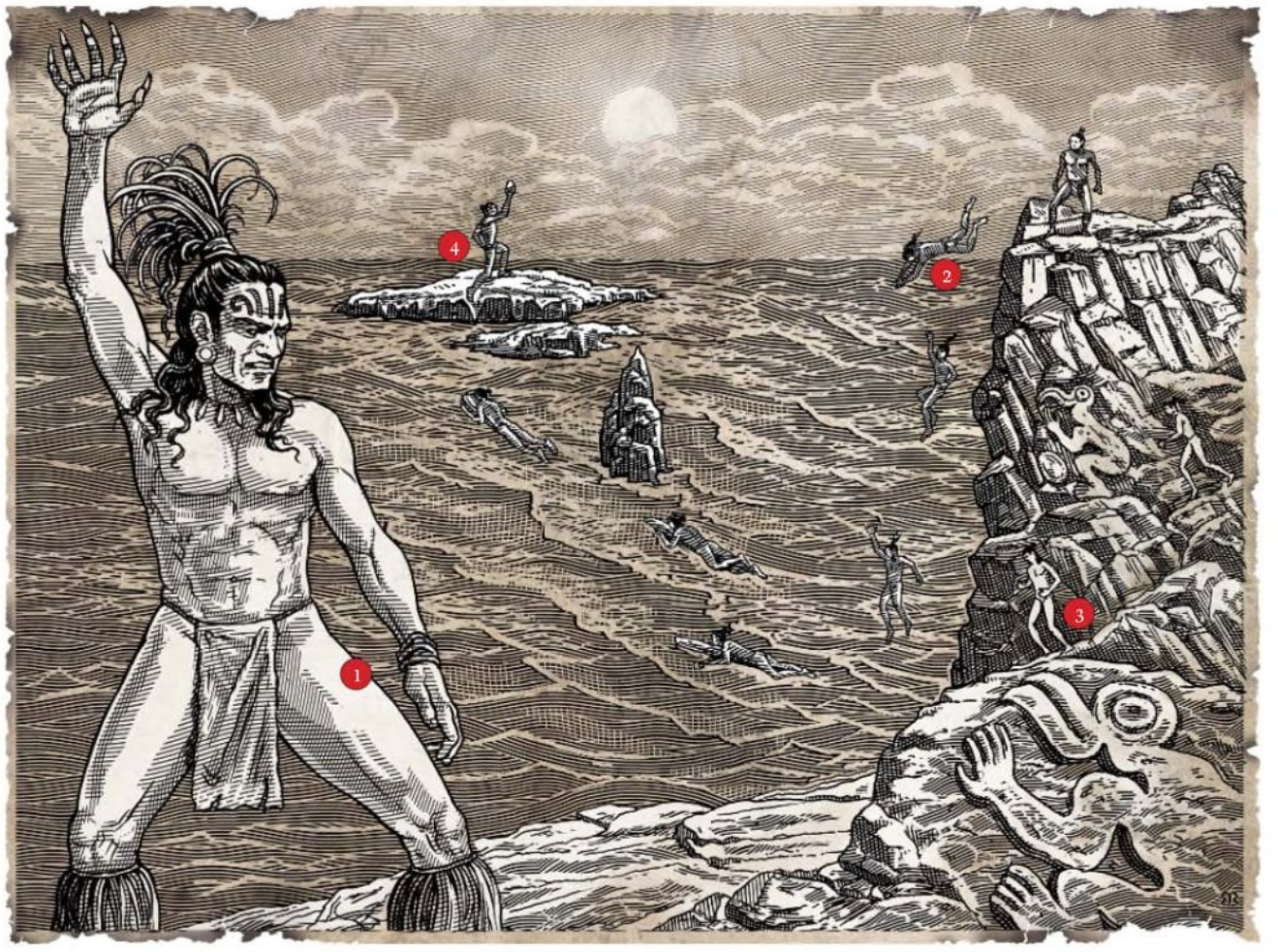
by the cello combo Rasputina (very likely the only song in English about the Birdman cult). Given its schlock wattage of orgy and disaster, plus ready-made drama of a death race, the Birdman seemed like catnip for Hollywood. And indeed, while on Easter Island, I'd seen weather-beaten *Rapa Nui* movie posters flaking off of telephone poles in Hanga Roa, the most remote community on Earth and the only place where the film had been a hit. Roger Ebert had praised it, tongue in cheek, for the gratuitous *National Geographic*-style topless women, but my Leonard Maltin compendium dismissed it with one and a half stars. Netflix didn't have it. I phoned around to my local stores, and a nearby Blockbuster told me it had 13 copies. Excellent! But when I showed up, it turned out the clerk thought I'd meant *Ratatouille*. I should've taken that as a sign of absurdities to come.

Instead, I ordered a Korean bootleg online, and a few days later watched the American auteur Kevin Reynolds, of *Waterworld* fame, crush a thousand years of Rapa Nui history into a 107-minute love story. For the amateur Rapa Nui-ist, anachronisms abound. The movie has everything happening at once, opening with a soaring bird's-eye view of Orongo and then panning to a colossal moai being wastefully hauled on log rollers. There was the fat dyspeptic king with long fingernails saying, "Nah! Make it bigger!" On, lickety-split, to the chopping down of the last tree, leading man Jason Scott Lee screaming the inevitable "Nooo!" And the climax of the film, as it surely had to be: the Birdman race, pitting the hero, Mr. Lee, an aristocratic "long ear," against his blue-collar "short ear" nemesis, played by Esai Morales.

To my delight, I watched the competitors eschew the deadly cliff for the chicken route, scampering along the thin ridge of the crater rim down to the saddle that Nicolas had pointed out. The movie Birdman racers carried paddleboards of woven reeds on shoulder straps (accurate, according to some accounts), and although one dude was hip-checked to a fatal fall and another slid some hundreds of feet, shredding his reed board, the scramble looked eminently doable. I also suspected that our guide had cadged a good bit of his account from the movie, an irony I found somehow uplifting.

FOUR MONTHS LATER, I ARRIVED ON RAPA NUI, jet-lagged from a day and a half of flying but with a mission: to perform my very own historical reenactment of the Birdman race. The thing to do was plunge right in and begin training, accumulating mana and staving off the *tabu* — the negative spirit — of inertia. But first I thought I would scout the village for a knowledgeable, sympathetic local, someone willing to advise a *hopu* (as the Birdmen competitors were called).

While it's true that Easter Island has endured not only environmental and societal collapse, but also small pox epidemics, slave raids,




**THE BIRDMAN RACE** Lore has it that it began with a signal from the reigning Birdman king (1). Some racers would dive straight off the cliff into the water (2), often to their death, while the more risk-averse wound their way down a slower route (3). First one to grab the season's first egg off Motu Nui (4) and return with it intact was the winner.

and missionaries, it seems to be doing all right now. The Rapa Nui are Chilean citizens, hopping back and forth between Santiago and Tahiti whenever rock fever strikes. As laid-back as it is far out, tiny Hanga Roa is a bit like a Polynesian Dodge City: just a couple of blocks of storefronts on the main drag and lots of horses clip-clopping down the middle of the road — often riderless, like regular citizens. Indeed, I'd read that there are some 8,000 semi-wild horses on Rapa Nui and only 4,000 people, an enigma I never heard explained.

I picked a pair of long-haired middle-aged athletes in boardshorts and posed the question immortalized by the Jason Scott Lee character in *Rapa Nui*: "Will you train me to compete for the Birdman?" Actually, what I asked was if they knew where I could rent a surfboard to paddle to Motu Nui.

"Don't do it," one of the old surfers said. "The islands are far, the water is very deep, and there are many sharks." His buddy simply twirled an index finger around his ear, signing that I was loco.

I eased on down Avenida Atamu Tekena (Main Street, Rapa Nui), just another international nutcase on the so-called "island of enigmas." I'd recently read in the news that a young Finn had been fined $17,000 for breaking the ear off a moai. He hadn't really been able to explain his motivation. Could I? Best to keep my Birdman pursuit clandestine, yet respectful, if the two could somehow be combined.

My first challenge was to scout a way down the volcano that didn't involve falling to my death. So the next day at dawn I set out on foot, striding along Avenida Atamu Tekena toward Rano Kau volcano with a powerful sense of purpose, while still trying to keep a low profile. But whatever feckless demeanor attracts maximum stray dogs, I had it. By the time I reached the end of the main drag, I looked like the Pied Piper of Rapa Nui. Thankfully, the pack thinned as I left the outskirts of town and started to climb the meadow that swooped up to Orongo. Like all expanses of grass on Easter Island — which is nearly the whole island — this one was pocked with rocks like God's own driving range. You're always watching where you're stepping, or else, while admiring the glories of the Pacific, staggering forward suddenly like a clown.

**THE MARINES IN THE BOAT STUCK CLOSE TO ME, AS IF I WERE SOME INJURED CETACEAN THEY COULDN'T QUITE FIGURE OUT HOW TO SAVE.**

My hike more or less followed what the Birdman cult called the Road of the Ao, the route of the procession that preceded the race. My progress was a great deal lonelier, but conspicuous all the same on the treeless terrain. I wasn't surprised to find myself being waved down by a Chilean National Park ranger.

I was looking for...*que*?

Squawk! Caught already. To explain that I was hiking up to look for a way to climb down was beyond my Spanish — not to mention all rules of rational behavior. The upshot of our halting conversation was that, while it wasn't forbidden to linger cliffside, it was *muy peligroso*. The park would not be responsible for my death, did I understand? Yes, I would take responsibility for my death, thank you.

I decided to try the other side of the volcano, avoiding Orongo itself, which would be guarded by rangers. It was a hike of several spectacular miles along the island-side crater rim, with all of Easter Island spread out below on one side, and on the other the vast bowl of Rano Kau sloping down to a floating marsh of totora reeds — the material used to make the torpedo-shape Birdman paddleboards. I was confident I could reach the saddle south of Orongo — the chicken route — unobserved by the rangers. But the trail dead-ended at a barricade with admonitory signage in Spanish: NO VA!

While I mulled incarceration for trespassing, I made a few tentative forays over the edge in a nonspecifically forbidden zone, on slick grass and rotten rock above fatal drops to the rocks below. The same little voice that always urges me to get closer to the edge now whispered insistently that I get the fuck back up. I would need a rope.

NICOLAS YANCOVIC, HALF-CROATIAN-CHILEAN, HALF-Rapa Nui, with blue eyes and blond dreads, owns the island's only rope and climbing harnesses. I'd met him on my first trip, when I'd stayed at the eco-resort Explora. He had been one of our guides (not to be confused with the Nicolas who took us to Orongo), and he'd invited me to go climbing, but there hadn't been time. I'd figured he would be easy enough to find in Hanga Roa. At a corner pizza joint near the church, I found a girl who knew him and called him on her cell phone. He was at home only about a block away — everything was only about a block away — and he showed up minutes later on a motorcycle. Climb? Sure! Did I know Mataveri? It was on all the tourist maps — the site of the weeks-long beach bash that preceded the Birdman race. We would meet there at noon on his day off, two days hence. I would wait for a propitious moment to bring up my Birdman ambitions.

When I arrived at Mataveri to meet Nicolas, he had rigged an anchor at the top of a hundred-foot rock face beside a cave. On the brief beach, a couple of locals were collecting flat pavers that had flaked from the cliff for a patio project, the Rapa Nui passion for stonework abiding still. I recognized one of them, another Explora guide, Singa, a long-haired tattooed surfer dude with a big gecko on his back and Make Make on one pec. He and his cousin Terai wandered over with a six-pack to watch us climb.

I went first, with Nicolas belaying, and stalled about 80 feet up. After a few attempts to swing my leg over, in the process gashing my shin, I called *no más* and returned to the beach bleeding from various cuts and abrasions.

"Souvenirs of Easter Island," Singa said, laughing.

I belayed for Nicolas, who knew the route by heart and tangoed gracefully to the top. Then Singa and Terai each took a turn, mastering the climb with brute strength, and barefoot — "Rapa Nui style!"

Being the sole failure on the route wasn't great for my mana, but afterward, when we sat on a makeshift driftwood bench drinking beers while the surf boomed and spirits were high, it seemed a good time to bring up the Birdman. I asked Singa if he thought I could kick out to Motu Nui on a boogie board.

"The water is very deep, and it is far," he said. Then, brightening, "But you can do it! Better with a longboard, I think." He mimed the rapid progress of a paddler on a 10-foot tanker: "Shoop! Shoop!"

I asked him about the cliffs of Orongo, which we could see brooding in the distance, how he thought the Birdmen of yore got down.

"My opinion," he said. "They had a route. Possibly a ramp."

A ramp! The sly devils. Not much mana in a ramp.

"But that was long ago. The waves wash it away. It is very dangerous now." He whistled for effect.

And Nicolas, what did he think, as a climber? Could he rig an anchor at Orongo, or near about? The question clearly distressed him. He may have heard it before.

"You know Red Bull? The energy drink? They wanted to bring back the race. But the national park told them no," Nicolas said. "It would be bad to try it, you know. Get kicked off the island."

**MAN ON A MISSION** Scouting the "chicken route" down the volcanic mountain Rano Kau, sans bloodthirsty opponents. Visible in the distance, to the far left, is the turnaround point, the islet Motu Nui. In between? Rocks and sharks.

He knew the cliffs nearby as well. Rotten rock. No anchors. Very bad. "This is our place for climbing, Mataveri." He shrugged.

It had kicked my ass, at any rate. The clock was ticking on the Birdman Project, and I wasn't any closer to the starting line.

THE NEXT MORNING, THE FOURTH DAY OF WHEEL-spinning, I popped into a souvenir shop on Avenida Atamu Tekena to buy a headband. In one account I'd read, the Birdman racers carried the egg in their mouths. But in another, and in the movie, they'd worn specialized tapa-bark egg carriers, little woven baskets, somewhat like a Jewish phylactery, that rested on the forehead. I settled for an I'm-going-out-of-my-fucking-mind Christopher Walken *Deer Hunter* do-rag, bright green with Rapa Nui bird designs. I chatted with the shop owner about my Birdman ambitions in bad Spanish, and then with her Scottish boyfriend in bad Scottish. He knew exactly who I needed to talk to.

"Wilo. Has a shop just down the street. Bike rentals and such. He's the adventure guy."

I headed straight to his place of business, a shed attached to a laundromat. The sign outside showed the Make Make character. Wilo came out to greet me; his pregnant wife waved from the doorway.

"The eyes are the balls, you see," he said, noticing me admiring the sign, "and the nose is the penis. Everything on the island is sex."

That aside, Wilo confirmed that he was the go-to man for adventure. "I love it," he said. "Mountain bikes, surfing. Whatever you need. You want to do the Birdman, it's not a problem. But it's very dangerous. Are you famous?" I pondered the most advantageous response, then answered honestly.

He frowned. "You are old," he observed. "But fit?"

Yeah, sorta. All right then. We quickly sketched out a plan. Later that day he would show me where I could jump into the sea, and then, tomorrow morning, when I did it for real, he would follow me out to Motu Nui in a boat. I didn't see how that was so dangerous. Never mind: I was happy to have found someone who solved all my Birdman problems in one fell swoop. Wilo, who was an adviser on the thwarted Red Bull campaign and had JPEGs to prove it, was an accomplished big-wave surfer and owned one of the island's two Jet Skis, which he used with a dude nicknamed Hydro for tow-in surfing. He would make an excellent water-safety officer.

We quickly came to a price: wonderfully low, I thought. He even offered to toss in a replica totora-reed paddleboard. More wonderful still. Plus, he had a traditional Rapa Nui warrior costume he could wear, for color. Cool. We agreed to meet that evening at a cafe to work out any remaining details. *(continued on page 128)*

**THE LAST GEARHEAD**
Leno behind the wheel of his self-modified, twin-turbo 1924 Bentley

# JAY LENO'S TIME MACHINES

**WELCOME TO AN ALTERNATE DIMENSION POPULATED BY AUTOMOTIVE PECULIARITIES AND MECHANICAL ODDITIES, WHERE VEHICLES ARE POWERED BY TURBINES AND TANK ENGINES. THIS IS JAY LENO'S WORLD, AND HE'LL BE YOUR GUIDE.**

*by* **EZRA DYER**
*photograph by* **JUSTIN STEPHENS**

JAY LENO PEERS AT THE MAZE OF PLUMBING BENEATH the 1907 White steam car, produces a lighter and begins putting flame to a jet of gasoline spurting from one of the pipes. "You have to turn the gasoline into a vapor," he says, as I reflexively back away, visions of a tragic pre-OSHA industrial boiler explosion leaping into my mind. Wondering how he ever perfected the procedure for starting a 1907 White — never mind the idiosyncrasies of all the other old machinery spread out over the property — I ask Leno how often he comes to his garage. "At least a couple of hours every day," he says. "This is the *only* place I go."

For good reason: Any gearhead worth his scraped knuckles would find Leno's place to be the second coming of Eden. I had long heard tales of what's stored inside, yet upon arrival I'm still awed by the scale of his obsession. "I have about 105 cars and about 85 motorcycles," says Leno, his need to guesstimate hinting at the constant flux of the collection. Leno's Big Dog Garage — and calling this edifice a garage is like calling the Vatican a honky-tonk holy house — is the centerpiece of his compound and is split between two industrial-park buildings that from the outside look like they should contain plumbing supplies. One is devoted to works in progress; the other houses those cars that are fettled and ready to drive.

Leno's place isn't just storage; it's a top-flight restoration shop, a parts fabricator, a custom manufacturer designed to serve the purposes of the Leno One-Man Preservation Society. His garage is better appointed than anything short of the space shuttle's hangar.

**ARIEL ATOM**
The $70,000 Atom proves that a vehicle can out-accelerate a million-dollar Ferrari Enzo with only a four-cylinder supercharged GM engine mounted behind the seats — provided you jettison weighty frills like doors and a windshield. Though intended for the track, it's technically street legal. "The hardest thing about a supercar is not making it go fast," Leno says. "It's making it stiff, making it so it doesn't squeak. With the Atom, there's nothing to rattle or break or fall off. You get the power-to-weight ratio of a McLaren F1 at a 10th of the price. Few cars will give you the visceral thrill of an Atom."

There's a paint booth, body shop, CNC mill, water jet cutter, and two dynamometers. To obviate the need for takeout, a granite-laden gourmet kitchen is nestled into a corner.

On one side sits my personal favorite, the Dimension SST 1200es three-dimensional printer. It's an unassuming cube about the size of a convenience store's doughnut display case, with a windowed door on the front. Feed it a computer-generated blueprint and it spits out the real thing, rendered in plastic. The Dimension's very existence makes me feel like one of those feral children you see on TLC, unable to comprehend the demonry involved in making a steering wheel magically appear out of nothing.

I meet Leno, who is clad in his usual denim work shirt and jeans and is surrounded by several mechanics who are busy wrenching on various projects. Were I not here, he would be doing the same. Lots of wealthy men have impressive car collections, but I doubt either Ralph Lauren or the Sultan of Brunei would personally call a turbine company in Worcester, Massachusetts, and convince it to make a part that's been out of production for 80 years, just for the sake of fixing a Doble steam car. Therein lies the key to understanding Leno's automotive infatuation: He's a car guy first — an engineer, a mechanic. The millions of dollars and celebrity status just make his hobby that much more fun.

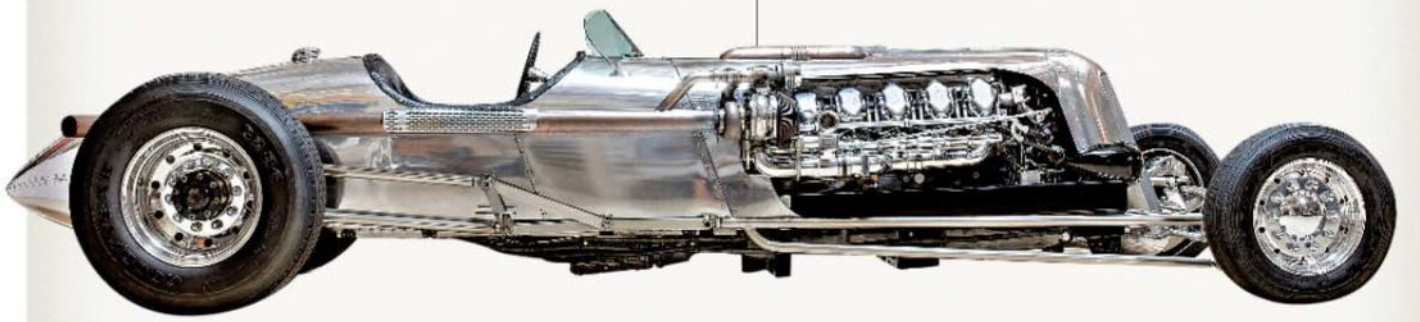
**1964 HONDA S600 SM**
A gnat of a sports car akin to old MGs and Triumphs, the Honda was never actually imported to the U.S. — a few were brought over by soldiers, though Leno thinks his came in through Canada because the gauge markings are in English. "It was built with bad Japanese steel, so it tends to rust, but it's a fantastic piece of engineering. It's got roll-up windows, a heater and defroster — things that weren't available on the British cars of the era. Opening the drivetrain is like looking inside a fine watch," says Leno. "If this said Porsche on it instead of Honda, it'd be worth a million dollars."

He enabled the addiction early, taking a job at Foreign Motors mechanic shop in his hometown of Boston at 19. He showed up one day and acted as if he belonged by doing odd jobs — three days later the shop's manager realized Leno wasn't even on the payroll and hired him. Had he never left for California in 1972 seeking stardom, there's no doubt that he would still be spending his weekends turning wrenches and swimming in 40-weight motor oil, just under less exotic metal. And so what he collects isn't informed by an effort to show the world that he's made it.

"I'm not going to pull up to a premiere in a Ferrari," Leno says. "Unless it's car people, I'm not interested in impressing anyone with my cars." He doesn't necessarily want the newest, or the oldest, the rarest, or even — despite a love of affixing turbochargers to engines — the fastest. His main criteria, I come to realize, is that every car have a story, whether that story involves technical greatness, racing provenance, or just plain oddness, as with a 1959 Fiat Millecento that the original owner kept in his living room for 40 years.

**TANK CAR**
This is a two-seater of comical proportions — a 16-foot-long, 9,500-pound hot rod built around a V-12 engine taken from an M47 Patton tank. It gained instant notoriety after Leno unveiled it in 2007, but even before that it was included as a hidden drivable car in *Gran Turismo 4*. Leno says it's even faster now than the version in the game. "Since then we've added Bosch fuel injection and twin turbos. It's probably between 1,400 and 1,600 horsepower." The upgrades also doubled his fuel efficiency — from three miles per gallon to six.

As we wander around the garages, Leno checks on the progress of cars and motorcycles in various states of disassembly.



PREVIOUS SPREAD: STYLED BY PHILLIP HOWARD; PROP STYLIST: PETER GARGAGLIANO. CARS PHOTOGRAPHED BY TOSHI OKU EXCLUSIVELY FOR MEN'S JOURNAL

**ECOJET**
This finned supercar hides a biofuel-fed 650-horsepower turbine — in other words, a jet engine repurposed for street duty. Leno conceived of this one-off concept car in 2006, and GM helped him build it. Unlike many concept cars, which don't meet safety or emissions standards, the EcoJet wears a license plate and is street legal. How? Is it registered as a 1967 Volkswagen because there's a shred of one riveted to the firewall somewhere? Leno shoots me a look that says, "Let's not get into that."

In one room, a re-creation of his father's 1966 Ford Galaxie takes shape. "I was 16, and my mom said, 'Let Jay pick out the engine,'" Leno recalls. "I convinced my pop to get the 7.0-liter motor." The new car will also have a 7.0-liter V-8, modified (of course) to make 750 horsepower. Some people view their childhood through rose-colored glasses; Leno prefers to view his through the ported and polished intake manifold on his pop's Galaxie.

WE WALK ACROSS THE DRIVEway to the second building, and Leno commences a high-speed tour of its contents. Some rows are entirely dedicated to specific marques: Duesenbergs, Bugattis, Bentleys. Others are devoted to particular categories, the lightweight supercars catching my eye immediately. That's where we find the Ariel Atom, the windshieldless, 300-horsepower love child of a go-kart and a Formula One racer. "Wanna drive it?" he asks. That's like Carrot Top asking a prop comic if he wants to check out his steamer trunk. But, you know, cooler.

**1963 CHRYSLER TURBINE CAR**
Chrysler built 50 of these cars and loaned them to the public for a real-world shakedown. The turbine didn't impress — it wasn't faster or more fuel-efficient than an internal combustion engine. Still, the car proved that the technology could work and reminded the world of America's technical supremacy. When the program ended, most of the Turbines were crushed: Chrysler has two, five sit in museums, and a guy in Indiana owns one. Leno, sounding triumphant, says, "This is the other one."

Leno dons goggles and fires up the raspy rear-mounted motor. He drives us away from Burbank, toward the canyons. Bionic wasps swarm in my left ear as the gaping air intake mounted between our heads inhales deeply under hard acceleration. We corner so quickly that my head feels like a tetherball. Leno seems amused. When he offers me the wheel, I'm content with a few full-throttle blasts while he dictates which lane to use. I'd like not to be known as the man who killed Jay Leno.

I get us both back to Big Dog Garage safely and learn that Leno's generosity with his toys isn't confined to drooling journalists. "Once, this kid wrote me a letter and said, 'I told all my friends that you're my uncle and you drive me around in your Lamborghini Countach. Can you bring me to school?' So I dropped him off at school one day in front of all his friends, and he opened the scissor door, got out, and said, 'Thanks, Uncle Jay!'"

This is Leno's way of ensuring the continued existence of the gearhead species. "When I was nine, a guy let me sit in his Jag XK120. It made such an impression on me. To me, that was the one that started me on this journey. It was the first classic car I bought when I got the money," he says. "When I see kids, if they want to sit in a car, climb on the seats, I say, 'Go ahead.' Maybe that ends up being an experience that gets them into this and brings in the next generation."

Through my tour of his collection, Leno mixes history lessons with comic banter. He describes driving the cigar-shape Rocket as "like riding around in your own coffin." Nearby is a 1967 Chrysler Imperial Crown Coupe once owned by a movie producer who loved it so much that he bought spare bodywork just in case he ever had an accident. He recounts the story of the Roebling family, which owned Mercer, the manufacturer of his 1913 Raceabout. "They built the Brooklyn Bridge and celebrated by going on a cruise — on the Titanic."

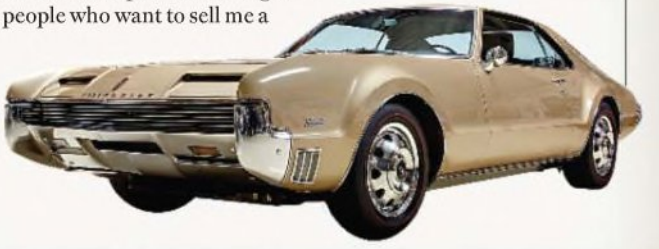
Next is a hulking relic of the past, a steam engine originally installed in a dye plant back in 1866. Leno points to two shiny spheres attached to the machine: "See those? That's the origin of the expression 'balls out.' Centrifugal force causes the balls to rise and get pushed outward, and that limited the speed of the engine." (And here I'd thought that "balls out" had a different etymology involving a case of Bud Light and a redneck named Larry.) This is another defining element of Leno's mania: He's so deep into cars that he cares about the machines that led to them — even when they ran a dye factory, which seems like an even more boring use for an engine than the minivan.

Soon we're back on the road, riding through Burbank in his 1963 Chrysler Turbine concept car. On the street the Chrysler purrs along, sounding like an idling Airbus, its turbine engine glass-smooth and turning at 22,000 rpm. I'm kind of amazed, given the history and rarity of this car, that Leno is driving it. I ask if any of his cars are too precious to drive — trailer queens, in petrolhead parlance. "I drive everything. I take my Model T to work all the time," he says.

Which is why, of all the things Leno's doing here, he can't be accused of running a museum. Nothing here is mothballed, nothing wears a DO NOT TOUCH sign. He collects automotive stories, yes, but he keeps those stories rolling, so they can continue to be told. "After some guys pass away, their families aren't interested in the car, but they want it to go to a good home," explains Leno. "Bob Dunlap [co-founder of the American Bugatti Club] bought his Bugatti in 1950 or '51, and when I got it, I let his family know that it'll stay in the garage and they can come visit it. It's like a memorial." And the '67 Chrysler Imperial owned by the movie producer? After he turned 93, he called Jay and said, "I want you to have this car."

**1966 OLDSMOBILE TORONADO**
The Toronado was a styling triumph, but its performance was hindered by front-wheel drive. So Leno converted his to rear-wheel drive, then added a turbocharged big-block producing more than 1,000 horsepower. It still appears stock, save subtle changes like larger wheels to fit upgraded brakes. Where does one buy 17-inch rims that perfectly mimic the Toronado's 15-inch originals? You don't. Leno custom-ordered his, each carved from a 400-pound chunk of aluminum.

In fact, Leno is offered 300 to 400 cars per week. "I get people who want to sell me a



**TIP OF THE ICEBERG**
A small section of Leno's collection. Best he can estimate he has 105 cars and 85 motorcycles.

# LENO DONS GOGGLES AND FIRES UP THE RASPY MOTOR. WE CORNER SO FAST MY HEAD FEELS LIKE A TETHERBALL.

Mercedes SSK 540, and they don't realize they have a replica with a VW engine. But every week there's something interesting."

Particularly if that something is vintage and eccentric. "All cars now have a symmetry about them, but old vehicles are so different. In the Lamborghini Miura, there are eight toggle switches with absolutely no labels. If you don't know what they do? Tough. You have to work at older cars to drive them," he says. "I tend to buy things you can't get anywhere else. I enjoy the pursuit of the unusual driving experience."

Which brings us to the White, a towering roadster on the scale of a Chevy Suburban. I help Leno push it from its parking spot out toward the door, where it soils the floor with water and a grubby river of old-steam-car debris while Leno and his head mechanic, Bernard, get it ready to drive. There's lots of conferring about pressures, opening of valves, and futzing about underneath to get the pilot light started.

I take this time to use the bathroom, where I find walls covered with thank-you notes from police departments, all essentially saying, "Thanks, Jay Leno, for the generosity." He probably doesn't get many speeding tickets, but that's not to say he gets none. Leno tells me that his 1906 Stanley has the distinction of being the oldest car pulled over by the California Highway Patrol for speeding — 75 miles per hour in a 55.

With the White's steam temperature rising, we pull out of the garage. The car rides high, like a truck, and the driver and passengers are out in the open. At stoplights our fellow motorists all see Leno in the driver's seat and want to chat, and he obliges. One guy says, "What was that motorcycle I saw you riding last week? A jet or something?" Leno gives a five-second explanation of his turbine-powered bike, but the light is still red, so we sit in awkward silence while the guy clearly racks his brain for something else to ask.

This ability to publicly enjoy his cars without becoming aggravated by the constant encroachment of fame is an amazing talent. For Leno, getting out and driving his toys represents an unavoidable collision of his public life and his private passion, yet he's not hiding behind tinted windows in a Mercedes. When NBC asked him to host the U.S. version of the British TV show *Top Gear*, Leno declined in part because he didn't want to commingle work and pleasure. In his semiregular "Motormouth" column for the *Sunday Times* of London, he offered this: "Cars are my hobby. Television is my job. When you make your hobby your job it becomes a whole different thing."

As we approach the gate to the garage, Leno gestures to the next building down the street. "I bought that one, and we're gonna connect it." More space. More cars. "It is a bit of a disease," he says.

**1924 BENTLEY**
This car was a mongrel racer, a 3.0-liter chassis fitted with a 4.5-liter engine, when Leno acquired it about 15 years ago. Given that it already had a nonoriginal motor, Leno went one better and installed an 8.0-liter, then added twin turbochargers. "Putting 8.0-liter motors in 3.0-liter cars is common," he says. "To Bentley people, it's like putting a 427 in a Chevy Nova." Leno's praying those turbos don't cause any problems, because the Bentley's cylinder heads are difficult to reach. "It's like going to the proctologist for a dental problem."

AARON FALLON

Swept out to sea by a riptide, a father and his 12-year-old son struggle to stay alive miles from shore. As night falls, with no rescue imminent, the dad comes to a devastating realization: If they remain together, they'll drown together.

# LOST IN THE

**THE OCEAN AT NIGHT IS A TERRIBLE DREAM.** There is nothing beyond the water except the profound discouragement of the sky, every black wave another singular misfortune. Walt Marino has been floating on his back for hours, the ocean on his skin, his mouth, soaking the curls of his graying hair. The water has cracked his lips, has formed a slippery glaze on his shoulders and arms. The salt has stuck to his contact lenses, burning the edges of his eyes. A small silver pendant of the Virgin Mary sticks to his collarbone on a link chain. He can no longer see the car key floating below his stomach, tied to the string of his floral swim trunks. The water licks against his ears. Every familiar sound is gone.

# WAVES

by JUSTIN HECKERT

¶ He arches his neck, contemplates again how far of a swim it might be to shore. He can't know how many miles. He tries to convince himself he might be able to make it back to the beach, to the rock jetty from which he was swept out to sea. He starts dog-paddling, but after about 30 minutes his arms give out, his back tires, and he decides that he'll die if he tries.

¶ In the dark, he can make out only the outline of his hands. He can see a faint glow in the distance, orange and premonitory, like a small fire, what he guesses to be the hotels and condos of Florida's northeast coast. He wonders if someone in a living room watching TV could look out far past the shore and see him floating there.

No, he decides. That's crazy. Even if they were looking through binoculars, they could probably see only the water, and maybe the ripples beneath the stars. Even the rescue helicopter hadn't been able to spot his head sticking above the surface, as it traced a search grid just beyond where the tide of Ponce de Leon Inlet empties into the Atlantic. Below the helicopter, patrol boats and Jet Skis had gone back and forth like sharks in the distance. He had waved his arms and screamed until his throat cracked, until the blue search signal and the light of the beam had thinned and disappeared. He now wonders if he'll ever need his voice again.

That was hours ago. When Christopher was floating beside him. Christopher, his little boy. When the two of them, father and son, were still together in the waves.

THE OCEAN WAS ALWAYS ONE OF CHRISTOPHER'S favorite places. The shallow water near the jetty rocks of Ponce Inlet, pale and green at the curve of the beach — Walt took him there as much as he could. Like a lot of autistic children, Christopher was drawn to water. By the sensation of it, by its sounds, its placidity — Walt could only guess. Christopher could never explain the ocean's hold on him, could only put on his swim trunks and stand barefoot on the wooden floor of the house, or find the car keys from the table and try to place them in Walt's hand, or just wait impatiently at the door of his convertible. As his son grew up, his main communication turned out to be the sounds of his laughter, his hands slapping at the tide foam, his giddy squeal as he climbed onto his father's back, swimming for hours until it was time for them to go home.

**CHRISTOPHER LOOKED AT WALT, AS IF TO ASK: WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO, DAD? WALT HAD NO ANSWER.**

On September 6, 2008, a Saturday, Walt took him to Ponce Inlet late in the afternoon. It was his weekend with the kids. As he did every two weeks, he picked up Christopher from the group home where he lived, then picked up Angela, his 14-year-old daughter, at her mom's house in Oviedo. Christopher sat next to Dad in the front seat of Walt's red Celica, the top folded back, wind running through Christopher's short dark-brown hair. Angela sat squished along with two of her friends in the back. It was a perfect day to go to the beach. They stopped at McDonald's, Christopher's favorite, on the way.

Christopher ate his double cheeseburgers slowly, maddeningly, the exact same way he did every time. He took off the top bun, held it in his hand, and ate the pickles. Then he ate the lettuce. Then the top bun. Then he ate the meat. Then the bottom bun, then each french fry, one at a time. He chewed vigorously, with his mouth open, loud enough for Walt to ask him to stop. Occasionally, when he became anxious or upset, he might stand beneath the spout of the soda fountain and press the button, and try to catch the spill in his mouth.

As Walt watched Christopher eat, he tried not to think about the meeting he'd had earlier in the day with his ex-wife Robyn and her husband Ed. Walt had lost his accounting job a few months before and asked if he could cut back on child-support payments. He'd split with Robyn eight years earlier, and whenever they spoke anymore it was briefly, tensely, and only in regard to the kids. During this meeting, in which Robyn and Ed agreed to reduce but not eliminate payments, they asked Walt what he planned to do with the kids that day. "I don't know," Walt replied, though he did know.

They arrived at New Smyrna Beach around 6:30 PM. The five of them walked the long wooden boardwalk, Christopher plodding behind, sometimes staring down. Walt followed him. The Ponce Inlet Lighthouse was the one thing, long and orange, that rose above the sparse landscape in the distance. The boardwalk ended at stairs that went down to the sand; by the time Walt and Christopher caught up to them, the girls had ignored the signs posted and were sliding down the backs of the white dunes as if on a playground. Walt and Christopher watched them for a while, then put their bags and towels down on the hard sand close to the water.

Christopher, in floral trunks like his dad, took off ahead of Walt, toward the south jetty, and splashed in, wading along the rocks. The tide on the protected side of the jetty looked serene. A group of people, their dark fishing poles like long weeds sticking up between the jetty rocks, watched them. Walt waded in to get Christopher, unaware that the tide had begun to go out, or of how strong it was, or that he was actually disobeying a county ordinance; no one was supposed to swim within 300 feet of a pier or jetty. Robyn and Ed had repeatedly asked Walt not to put Christopher in any situation that could be dangerous, and they asked him in particular not to take Christopher to the beach. But Walt didn't listen to them. He was certain that it made Christopher happy to be here.

The current grabbed father and son almost immediately. They floated past the glistening rocks, and then it pulled them faster, the sand disappearing beneath their toes. Within a minute, Walt and Christopher were 50 feet out, the ocean in their faces and ears.

"Do you need help?" one of the fishermen yelled at Walt as he watched him being pulled away.

"We're okay!" Walt shouted back, giving a thumbs-up. He still thought he had things under control, that they could make it back. They had waded into this water a thousand times, he and Christopher.

But this time the current was much stronger. Another two minutes, 200 yards farther out to sea. Walt knew they were in trouble now. His heart thumped in his ears. "Don't come in!" he screamed to Angela, who was now staring out at them in fright from the jetty. "Call 911! 9-1-1! 9-1-1!" He repeated this instruction, hands cupping his mouth, over and over, trying to keep his head above water as the waves grew, but Angela was now out of earshot.

One second Walt could see the beach, and the next he was below the horizon. He tried to focus on Christopher's head, the dark-brown hair wet and matted, the only part of him above water. Christopher was about 20 feet ahead of Walt now, bobbing and laughing hysterically. Walt yelled at Christopher to swim back to the jetty with him — "Come on, let's go, let's swim!" — but they had been raked into the middle of the inlet, where the current's pull was even stronger.

After 20 minutes, they were about a mile out, at the mouth of the open sea. A green navigational buoy bobbed there, tall and round, with a rusted bell clanging back and forth. Walt reached out to try and grab onto the buoy but struggled against the current. Christopher just kept laughing, unaware of the danger, of the situation, of the fading shore and the strength of the current, of the ocean ahead. As they floated past the buoy, there was nothing else to stop them from drifting into the sea.

WALT STUDIED CHRISTOPHER AS THE SUN went down. It was a game to his son, he decided — floating there without a care in the world. Farther out from shore, the light dwindling, the land itself was less visible. The current seemed to relax, and it was hard to tell how fast they were moving anymore.

PREVIOUS SPREAD: IAN BERRY/MAGNUM PHOTOS

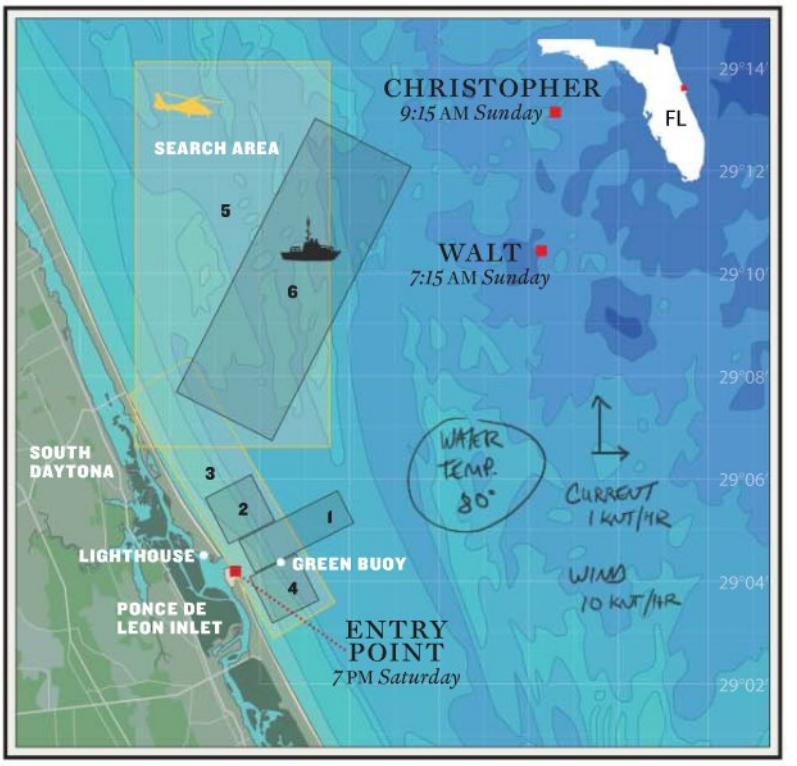
Staying afloat was all there really was to do. Walt told himself to keep his eye on Christopher, to make sure his head stayed above the four-foot waves. But his mind wandered to his own mom and dad waiting for them back at the house, to the girls left on the beach, to nothing at all. He forced himself not to consider what could be swimming below them. The only sounds to keep them company were the lap of the waves and the slap of the fins of the small fish that jumped onto the surface. Walt could see the white point revolving at the top of the lighthouse, counted the seconds of its revolution. He decided the coast guard would probably be coming for them soon. They had been in the water for two hours, he guessed. They were beginning to tire.

Christopher was no longer laughing, so Walt decided it was time to give him a break. He dog-paddled to his son, grabbed his arm, and let Christopher climb on his back. Walt, who'd become a certified lifeguard because Angela's Girl Scout troop needed him to get his license, took a deep breath. Then he arched his back and dipped his head forward below the surface, arms slightly extended from his sides — the dead man's float.

He lay facedown in 30-second increments, coming back up for air, wiping the water from his cheeks, spitting the ocean out of his mouth. Each time he would clutch Christopher's hands, then lift him up on his back. Christopher would lay his stomach on top of Walt and wrap his arms around his father's neck. Each time Walt rose to take a breath he ached more; after only a few minutes he came up again and clutched his stomach. Then he vomited. He puked everything he had eaten at lunch, big chunks of his cheeseburgers, floating in a pool of bile on the surface, barely digested. He dry heaved until his throat burned; he was screaming gibberish, nonsense, "Jesus, God, help us...."

Small fish surfaced in packs to feast on the vomited meal, and Christopher reacted with panic. He began to scream. He grabbed at Walt's hair and tried to rip it out of his head. He was thrashing on Walt's back, his weight pushing Walt beneath the surface. Christopher weighed about 120 pounds, and he was tearing at his father, digging his fingernails into him, crying at the top of his lungs. Walt pulled him off of his back, wiped his eyes, and croaked, "Please, Christopher, calm down. Please be a good boy." Christopher looked at Walt, pleading with a pair of helpless eyes, as if to ask: What are we going to do, Dad? Walt had no answer. He couldn't breathe.

Christopher grabbed for him again, jumping out of the water to get away from the fish, splashing salt water into Walt's eyes. Walt went under, gulping a throatful of ocean that made him vomit again. Crying, desperate to breathe, he yelled at Christopher, at the situation. Christopher was screaming again, too. What could Walt do? There was really only one thing he could do, for the both of them. He was forced to make a horrible decision: If they stayed together, if Christopher kept clutching his father, they would both drown. Their only chance was for Walt to separate himself from Christopher, to hope that his son could stay afloat on his own. It was the only choice that made any sense. He looked at his son again, then pushed him away into the ocean.



**MIRACLE RESCUE** A strong current pushed them wide of the search zone. After 12 hours, Walt Marino was found nine miles from where he went in. Christopher (in rescue helicopter, at left) drifted another three miles.

PHOTO: COURTESY WALT MARINO/U.S. COAST GUARD. ILLUSTRATION: EMILY COOPER

When he was 15 months old, they knew something was wrong. He didn't pay attention, didn't make eye contact, didn't cry. He would just scream and grunt. He didn't say a real word until he was four. After Christopher was diagnosed with autism as a toddler, Walt spent 20 grand on a couple of miracle cures, including an injection of pig hormones into Christopher's leg. He also looked into another form of treatment called "patterning," an exercise designed to improve neurologic organization that required several people to help lift and move the patient's legs and arms and head for several hours a day. But it cost $10,000, and Walt thought it looked like torture.

He knew where the bathroom was because Walt and Robyn showed him, but he didn't know how to ask for it when he needed it. Sometimes he would pee or shit in his pants and laugh, or smear his feces on the walls. He would make high-pitched noises when Robyn handed him the telephone and told him his dad was on the other end. He could say "goodbye," "hello," "thanks," "water," "hungry," "candy." He could repeat the phrases "I love you" and "Hi, Dad" and "Wow." A cadre of therapists had worked with him over the years, tried to teach him skills like brushing his teeth and buttoning a shirt, how to chew quietly. Some of them had quit because he bit them.

He ignored other children, mostly. He'd pick up an object — say, a string of thread — and let it drop, over and over, to see how it behaved on its way to the floor. Sometimes he would spin madly in a circle.

He had so much energy it was exhausting, and he required constant supervision. As he got older, he would sit in the backseat on

his way to school with Angela and would bite her on the arm or pull her hair as she screamed. He was fearless and reckless because he didn't have a concept of danger. There was just a connection missing somewhere. That was the easiest way to describe it.

He couldn't carry on a conversation, but he could listen and understand. He could follow directions: Pick this up, please, Christopher. Take it over there and come back. He responded to sign language, because it was visual. He could point to a flash card to indicate what he wanted to eat. He was in an eighth-grade class with 10 other autistic kids, some who didn't speak or even act like they knew the teacher was there. The teacher once had a student who spoke only by reciting an infomercial: "If you didn't buy it here, you paid too much!"

In the callous terms of the DSM-IV — the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* — Christopher displayed "markedly abnormal nonverbal communication." To his father he was shy and curious, and sometimes so quiet and so temperate that Walt could imagine his son was perfectly normal.

THE FIRST RESCUE HELICOPTER APPEARED JUST before nightfall, then the boats in the distance, engines breathing on the water. Walt called over to Christopher, who had drifted maybe 10 feet away. He told him that he was a good boy and a great swimmer. He pointed his finger to the blinking helicopter high in the sky near shore, and said, "Blue lights. Blue lights. Blue lights coming to get us." Walt felt like he understood.

Christopher certainly understood what it meant to be in the water. Walt pictured him floating on his back at the YMCA in Oviedo, where he'd learned to swim. Walt had spent hours there teaching him to float, Christopher with his green goggles strapped across his face, laughing, looking up at the ceiling painted to look like a sky.

At the Y, Christopher was a regular boy. The lifeguards knew him by name, let him go into the utility closet and pick out a foam ring to play with in the water, the same green one every time. He always walked the tiled stoop around the pool, feeling the water on the tops of his feet. Then he'd jump in. Walt would show him how to fill his stomach with air so he could float, then pull him along by his shoulders, walking him around the left lane of the pool.

Out at sea, in the fading light, Christopher rose and dipped from Walt's line of sight. Walt tried to talk to his son to keep him calm, reciting his favorite lines from his favorite movies. Christopher loved to sit right in front of the small television in his room and watch Disney videos all day. Sometimes he would put his eyeball as close to the screen as he could get it without touching. His all-time favorite scene was Buzz Lightyear in *Toy Story*, flying into space, saying his trademark phrase: "To infinity...and beyond!"

"To infinity!" Walt yelled to Christopher over the waves. He waited for Christopher to respond.

"To infinity, Christopher!"

"...and beyond!" lightly from atop the wave, as Christopher was lifted back into view. It didn't sound like that when Christopher said it, though. It always sounded like "infin' a beyon'..." And he'd always send his fist into the air. That little fist pump — Walt did it in the water then, too, even though he was trying to conserve energy.

After a while the first helicopter left and another took its place, its blue light flickering over the open water. Looking out toward the black sky, Walt began to wave his arms, certain now that no one could hear him. Christopher pounded his fist against the waves. A group of jellyfish interrupted them, swimming into Walt's and Christopher's legs, clutching onto them and burning like strands of electric hair. Christopher shrieked. Then Walt was lifted up at the same time Christopher was lowered. When the tide evened, Christopher was even farther away, 30 or 40 feet. Walt tried to swim toward him, flapping his arms as hard as he could. Then a wave lifted Christopher, and Walt was caught on the other side. When the wave broke, Christopher was no longer there.

**CHRISTOPHER BEGAN TO PANIC. HE WAS THRASHING ON WALT'S BACK, PUSHING HIM BENEATH THE SURFACE.**

ONLY HIS BREATH IN THE DARKNESS, A SILENCE as everything settled in. For half an hour, Walt had yelled, begging for Christopher to answer. He had given up conserving energy, had been swimming as hard as he could to try and find his son. "Who's my best boy?" Nothing. "Christopher, who's my buddy?" Only the fish beneath him, brushing against his back and legs.

"Christopher?!"

Walt spun in every direction, trying to spot the small white face and the dark-brown hair.

But he was gone.

Walt wiped his eyes, took a breath. He's gone. It was a thought as dark and fathomless as the ocean itself. At that moment, he couldn't see it any other way — Christopher was dead. So Walt stopped yelling and shivered as a trail of bright green phosphorescence floated past him. He stared at it, amazed by its arrival, the only color on the sea, passing behind him like lights beneath the water. He told himself it was probably peaceful, told himself that Christopher just got tired and finally let go. Just slipped away under the sea.

But Walt's mind wouldn't fully accept that. Christopher was a terrific swimmer. He had nine lives, Walt liked to say. Maybe he was merely playing a game. Maybe he was floating, just beyond where Walt could see. Maybe he just wanted to be alone for a while, like he sometimes did.

Christopher had wandered off so many times, Walt learned to expect he would always be okay. "Eloped" is the word used to describe the way an autistic person sometimes wanders off — is there one second, then vanishes.

Christopher had eloped at the mall, at the hardware store, from Walt's parents' house, and after a search they would often find him playing in water. At first it was the lake in their old neighborhood, then the retention pond at the bottom of the street — the police had sent a helicopter to search for him. Then it was the neighbors' pool: floating on his back, naked. The neighbors called the cops, who came and pulled Christopher out and saw the silver chain bracelet on his left wrist with his identification and phone number.

Once when Christopher wandered off, the police searched for him again, and half an hour later, he turned up in the fountain at the Oviedo mall. Christopher had walked across a busy intersection, crossed through six lanes of traffic, had navigated the winding road back to the parking lot at night. He had taken his clothes off and was splashing beneath the falling water in his underwear, his feet brushing the pennies people had tossed in to make a wish.

After each of these episodes, Robyn would fume at Walt. She no longer trusted him. She and Ed held their breath whenever Christopher was with Walt. When Christopher was with Robyn and Ed, they never let him outside without maintaining physical contact. But Walt wanted Christopher to experience the world like a regular boy, wanted him to walk the stadium stands without holding his

hand and feel the beach sand and breathe the air, wanted him to make choices.

Walt couldn't even bear to call him autistic, to label him that way, and his voice always cracked when he talked about his "little buddy." He took the good days, swimming together at the Y, sitting together in the front pew of church, eating at McDonald's without incident, and weighed all of that against the tantrums, the outbursts, the moments in which his son would lunge at him, out of the blue, and sink his teeth into his arm. That's when Walt would sob. He'd lament having to shout at Christopher, asking him why he'd attack his own father. For every good day there was always some kind of reminder of the bad.

But now he was gone. They shouldn't have come out to the beach, he told himself. He should've rented a movie and spent the day at home. He could never face his own family. He wouldn't know what to say to his mother and father, to his daughter, to the coast guard, to Robyn and Ed. The guilt, too, the realization that he had been responsible for his son's death.

He decided that he should take his own life. It would be easier. Bawling, his tears mixing with the salt water on his face, he took a deep breath, exhaled, and slipped like he imagined Christopher did beneath the surface.

But there was Angela. He had almost forgotten about her. He kicked his legs and came up for air, expelling a mouthful of water. She needed a father too.

THE OCEAN AT DAWN IS A WONderful dream. He thought the night might last forever and now considers the morning itself a sign, too. The birds dive to the surface, stretching out their patternless wings as if to yawn. A seagull, white and with crystal eyes, lands right next to Walt. It looks directly at him, opens its orange beak like it's trying to get him to talk. Walt can suddenly see the life of everything, the fish swimming on the surface, the actual blue of the water. His neck aches like hell. His hands and wrists are swollen stiff. His lips are chapped and bleeding. He's numb and warm. His tongue is swollen, his eyes dry.

He thinks he's floated much farther out, but he really has no point of reference. No one even knows the exact direction in which he and Christopher floated. He has survived the night, he realizes, for nothing. He stares forward, shielding his face from the sun with his arm, and then looks back down to the water, thinking of Christopher.

AT 7:15 AM, ON THE DECK OF A RECREATIONAL fishing boat called the Open Range, Shawn McMichael looks out and sees a reflection in the water. Just turns his head, while the five other men on the deck are staring forward toward the horizon. A glitter, something sparkling, something that maybe on a thousand other days would never catch his eye. It could be anything, maybe one of the cruise-ship balloons that frequently float off the deck and then settle and shimmer on the surface. Shawn looks again and sees movement. Stanley Scott, the boat's owner, realizes it's a man. Floating. By himself, waving his arms. The boat slows, turns hard, comes within 50 feet of him.

"How did you get here?" Stanley shouts. "Where's your boat?"

The man is delirious, won't stop yelling — they can't get a word in. He asks about someone named Christopher. The men ease up to him, extend a boat pole out on the left side so he can grab onto it, and walk him around to the platform on the back end, by the engines. It takes two guys to haul him in. Dripping water, swollen, pale, shivering, jellyfish stings like long red scars on his legs. The silver pendant dangling below his chin — that's what Shawn had seen reflecting.

**BACK AT THE BEACH** Six months after their ordeal, father and son returned to Ponce de Leon Inlet.

"I lost him!" They sit him on a beanbag in the back of the boat. "I lost him!" He repeats that phrase until they can get him to stop shouting and ask what he's talking about. "Christopher, Christopher... have you seen him? Oh, my God, have you seen him?" The men drape a windbreaker over his shoulders, hand him a bottle of water. He drinks six, one after the other. "He's a great swimmer. He's a great swimmer.... Oh, God, he's gone."

He has an amazing, preposterous story, all right. He's floated nine miles northeast into the ocean from Ponce Inlet. The men don't say a word. They're in awe. They get the coast guard on the radio and tell them they've found a man named Walter Marino, and his autistic son is still missing.

Walt shivers and sniffles in the boat. He calls his younger sister, Linda, and tells her that he's alive. The night before, Linda had not been able to sleep, knowing her brother and nephew were missing. She stayed up with her elderly mother and father, calling the pastor at the church and asking him what to do. "We're going to pray for a miracle," he had told her. Robyn and Ed stayed up too, in fear for Christopher's life, Robyn convulsing, so sick that Ed almost called 911. Angela had gone to sleep thinking about how her dad had once told her he wanted his ashes scattered, and *(continued on page 130)*

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN LOOMIS

# FALL ESSENTIALS

There's no reason that looking good and staying dry have to be mutually exclusive. Here's how to nail both, for work and play.

## THE COMMUTE

**CLASSIC AND PRACTICAL**
Look for high-end coats that use Loro Piana's luxurious Storm System — a breathable wind- and rain-resistant fabric — like this one from Luigi Bianchi Mantova. Or you can treat any jacket with a DWR (durable water repellent) spray from Tectron or Nikwax.

**BOTTEGA VENETA UMBRELLA**
*$940; bottegaveneta.com*

**LUIGI BIANCHI MANTOVA COAT**
*$1,275; 212-755-0737*

**HICKEY FREEMAN SHIRT**
*$195; hickeyfreeman.com*

**POLO RALPH LAUREN VEST**
*$90; ralphlauren.com*

**NAUTICA TIE**
*$45; Macy's*

**BALL WATCH**
*$2,199; ballwatch.com*

**CARTIER ROADSTER PEN**
*$400; cartier.com*

**COACH BREAST POCKET WALLET**
*$188; Coach stores*

**JOHN VARVATOS CHELSEA BOOT**
*$450; johnvarvatos.com*

**COLE HAAN CHAPLIN BELT**
*$68; colehaan.com*

*photographs by* **TRAVIS RATHBONE**
*fashion by* **BRYNN CARHART**
*styled by* **SUSAN GEORGE**

**BANANA REPUBLIC DEERSKIN GLOVES**
*$70; bananarepublic.com*

**BURBERRY LONDON SCARF**
*$295; us.burberry.com*

**LIVE IRON-FREE**
Avoid the rumpled-professor look with a suit cut from a wrinkle-resistant fabric. You won't find better than this Zegna two-button jacket and pants made from the company's Traveller worsted wool, but any heavy wool with a light thread count (100 or lower) will shake off creases well.

**ZEGNA SUIT**
*$2,395; zegna.com*

**BURBERRY LONDON SHIRT**
*$175; us.burberry.com*

**LOUIS VUITTON TIE**
*$195; louisvuitton.com*

**POLO RALPH LAUREN EYEWEAR**
*$140; ralphlauren.com*

**CALVIN KLEIN COLLECTION BRIEF**
*$795; calvinklein.com*

**BODUM TRAVEL PRESS**
*$30; bodumusa.com*

**NAVIGON MOBILE-NAVIGATOR APP FOR IPHONE**
*$90; iTunes store*

**INCASE IPHONE CASE**
*$35; goincase.com*

**NIXON WIRE MIC HEADPHONES**
*$90; nixonnow.com*

**PLANTRONICS DISCOVERY 975 BLUETOOTH**
*$130; plantronics.com*

**JOHN LOBB SHOES**
*$1,265; johnlobb.com*

**BOTTEGA VENETA SOCKS**
*$70; bottegaveneta.com*

**WEATHERPROOF HAT**
*$20; nordstrom.com*

# APRÈS-SKI

**LOUIS VUITTON BOOTS**
*$860; louisvuitton.com*

**LUMINOX FIELD CHRONO ALARM WATCH**
*$625; tourneau.com*

**STANLEY FLASK**
*$20; stanley-pmi.com*

**TUMI WALLET**
*$58; tumi.com*

**WOOL IS THE WAY**
Your neon-orange Gore-Tex shell is fine for the slopes, but when it's time to hit the resort bar, don woolen outerwear like Moncler's snowboard pants and Gant's jacket-vest. The natural fiber repels water, won't smell even after a few days of wear, and makes for a more elegant take on ski-town style.

**GANT JACKET WITH ZIP-OFF SLEEVES**
*$575; gant.com*

**VICTORINOX SWEATER**
*$175; swissarmy.com*

**ZEGNA SPORT SCARF**
*$175; zegna.com*

**MONCLER NEIGE COLLECTION WOOL SNOWBOARD PANTS**
*$850; moncler.it/eng*

**LOUIS VUITTON HAT**
*$890; louisvuitton.com*

**BURBERRY LONDON GLOVES**
*$225; us.burberry.com*

**SALT OPTICS WESTFALL SUNGLASSES**
*$400; saltoptics.com*

**GARMIN OREGON 550 GPS**
*$499; garmin.com*

**KIEHL'S LIP BALM**
*$9.50; kiehls.com*

**L.L. BEAN HAND WARMERS**
*$10 for 10; llbean.com*

**KNOW YOUR DOWN**
Technical apparel companies such as North Face measure a jacket's down insulation by fill power, but fashion brands rely on a down/feather ratio instead. More down means a warmer, lighter jacket. One hundred percent down is pricey; this Andrew Marc parka's 80/20 mix strikes a good balance.

**RALPH LAUREN BOOTS**
*$295; ralphlauren.com*

**EDDIE BAUER SOCKS**
*$8.50; eddiebauer.com*

**BOSS BLACK BAG**
*$685; hugoboss.com*

**BURBERRY LONDON SCARF**
*$295; us.burberry.com*

**ANDREW MARC BRENNAN PARKA**
*$595; andrewmarc.com*

**CLUB MONACO SWEATER**
*$99; clubmonaco.com*

**BOSS BLACK GLOVES**
*$125; hugoboss.com*

**RALPH LAUREN BLACK LABEL PANTS**
*$395; ralphlauren.com*

# GEAR

photograph by
**Jeff Harris**

TESTED

COVERED THIS MONTH


**SKIS** *pg. 114*

**SKI BOOTS** *pg. 116*

**SNOWBOARDS** *pg. 118*

**SKI HELMETS** *pg. 120*

**BASKETBALL SHOES** *pg. 124*

**AXES** *pg. 126*

**GIRO SEAM HELMET**

SNOW SPORTS '09/'10

## GEARED UP FOR THE SLOPES

WHETHER YOU NEED BETTER SKI BOOTS FOR SLASHING POWDER IN THE BACKCOUNTRY, THE RIGHT SNOWBOARD FOR TACKLING DOUBLE BLACK DIAMONDS, OR A MORE COMFORTABLE HELMET, WE'VE GOT YOU COVERED.

### ZEAL OPTICS ECLIPSE SPPXTREME GOGGLES

Some people say that any new goggles will do, but those people haven't worn a pair from Zeal. The company has built a reputation developing technologically advanced lenses that are both polarized and photochromic, meaning the tint automatically adjusts to ambient brightness. Its newest lens, the SPPXtreme, may sound like it was named by Mountain Dew's marketing department, but it's Zeal's best yet, transitioning in seconds from a near-clear 13 percent opacity to a welding visor–like 43 percent. Get it in the Eclipse frame — the largest Zeal makes that will still fit under a helmet — and you'll have a single pair of goggles that can handle all conditions. [*$200; zealoptics.com*]
—FREDERICK REIMERS

# SKIS

AFTER RIDING THE NEWEST PLANKS AT 15 RESORTS, INCLUDING TWO HELI-SKI OPERATIONS AND A BACKCOUNTRY TRAVERSE, WE'VE FOUND THE BEST FOR WHATEVER SNOW YOU FANCY. *by* Porter Fox

**BACKCOUNTRY**

**1. DYNAFIT MANASLU**

You have to get up to go down in the backcountry, so save some sweat with the feathery Manaslu. We could barely feel the 49-ounce ski on our foot while traversing the Tetons. The early-rise tip floated in powder, whether skinning up 2,000 vertical feet or carving down through 20 inches of cold smoke. Impressively, the Manaslu never had a problem with wind pack or ice. [*$700; dynafit.com*]

**ALL-MOUNTAIN**

**2. K2 SIDESTASH**

All-mountain now includes sidecountry, and nothing shredded beyond the boundary ropes like the SideStash. The wood-core ski is versatile, with traditional sidewalls for muscle, plus cap construction in the tip and tail for forgiveness into and out of turns. The ski's two titanium layers and rockered tip powered through tracked powder and floated in deep fluff. Bonus: a flat, notched tail for easy packing and skinning. [*$950; k2skis.com*]

**GROOMERS**

**3. VOLKL TIGERSHARK II-FOOT POWERSWITCH**

Skis, like Americans' waistlines, keep getting wider — even a high-speed carver like the Tigershark. With almost 50mm of sidecut, the ski turns by itself, never hooking or catching a tip. A dial on the back alters its flex, but changes weren't noticeable. No matter — the ski's titanium-reinforced wood core was incredibly stable on steep, icy groomers back East and corduroy out West. [*$1,525; volkl.com*]

**POWDER**

**4. SALOMON CZAR**

From knee-deep spines in Alaska's Chugach Range to icy 45-degree couloirs in the Dolomites, Salomon's Czar is the most forgiving powder ski available. Perfectly balanced, with an early-rise tip, it drives through powder at high speeds and sticks landings like Sully. Just use the "traditional" binding mount holes (not center-mount), unless you plan to land backward off a cliff on purpose. [*$910; salomonski.com*]

# SKI BOOTS

WANT TO CARVE SMOOTHER, CHARGE HARDER, OR JUST GET THE FEELING BACK IN YOUR TOES? THEN CHOOSE THE RIGHT FOOTWEAR CAREFULLY. *by* Marc Peruzzi

**BEST FOR**
Pillowy-soft landings after going big

### ▲ KRYPTON IL MORO T

Whether you're clearing tabletops in the park or cliff-dropping off-piste, the Il Moro T sucks up the impact. The plastic outer tongue doesn't "bottom out" like those on many boots. Pair that with a cushy heat-moldable liner and extra shin padding, and you have your own landing gear. When you're done busting tricks, a slap ratchet buckle lets you cinch the upper cuff, readying the boot for carving. [*$875; dalbellosports.com*]

**BEST FOR**
Tighter response on double black diamonds

### ▲ NORDICA DOBERMANN PRO EDT 130

You need to transfer as much power as possible to a ski to sink its edges into boilerplate snow — hard to do when your boot's sole is bendy plastic. Not a problem with the Dobermann, since its screwed-in aluminum footboard is 40 percent stiffer than the previous generation's. Just avoid the too-stiff World Cup racing version. [*$995; nordicausa.com*]

### ▼ DYNAFIT TITAN TF-X

Backcountry boots are lightweight and flexible, but strong skiers overpower them on downhills. Alpine boots only work for climbing if you like tweaked knees and bloody toes. The Titan is the missing link: Enjoy resort-worthy stiffness in ski mode, then flip a switch for touring agility and flexibility. And the Titan comes with inserts to mate with an alpine setup or Dynafit's top-notch touring binding. [*$759; dynafit.com*]

**BEST FOR**
Attacking the back-country and groomers

### ▼ SALOMON FALCON CS

You don't need race boots to turn fat powder skis, but you do need a race boot's precise fit. That once meant stretching a boot shell to fit your foot, until Salomon created its line of custom shells (the "CS" in Falcon CS). In 20 minutes a boot fitter can mold everything to you, liner included. On the hill, the Falcon delivers enough shock-absorbing flex for a forgiving ride in bumps and crud. [*$785; salomonski.com*]

**BEST FOR**
Glovelike comfort with added control

## WHY YOUR FEET HURT

*Avoid these common mistakes to ensure your new boots fit perfectly.*

**YOUR FOOT ISN'T AS LARGE AS YOU THINK IT IS**

"Fifty percent of people buy their boots too big," says Paul Richelson, a certified pedorthist with Feet First in New Hampshire. This makes you over-buckle, creating pressure points. The boot should feel snug all over without painful pinching or tightness. When you stand up in the boots (liners in), your toes should brush the front, then pull back when you flex your weight forward.

**YOU DIDN'T TRY ON THE BOOT PROPERLY**

Before you buy a boot, make sure to shell size it: Pull out the liner, slide your foot into the shell, and look at the space behind your heel. "A half inch or less is good for a high-performance fit," says Mark Elling, a master boot fitter. "Three-quarters of an inch is the gold standard for comfort. More than an inch is too big." If the salesperson doesn't know how to shell size, leave.

**YOU DON'T HAVE ENOUGH SUPPORT**

Luckily, it's easy enough to get more support with an add-in footbed. You can pick up a cut-to-fit version at a ski shop ($35 or so), or for a perfect match, ask the shop to recommend a trained boot fitter. Just avoid the middle ground, like letting the kid at the local mall sports emporium set you up with a custom one. "A poorly built footbed can be excruciating," says Elling. "Always seek out technicians who specialize in them." —M.P.

# SNOWBOARDS

MORE THAN 20 OF THE BEST NEW DECKS ENTERED OUR TESTING THUNDERDOME; THESE FOUR FAVORITES REMAINED. *by* Stephen Krcmar

**GROOMERS**
**1. NEVER SUMMER TITAN**
We could tell you that the Titan is fast, stable, and more responsive than an EMT, but it isn't until you ride the board that you understand how great it feels inbounds. On our first day with the Titan, we were already getting lower in our turns than with any board we'd ridden, touching snow at speeds that would get us pulled over in a school zone. Experienced riders will be able to exploit it best, hard-charging the fall lines and finding the most creative path down the steeps. [*$549; neversummer.com*]

**ALL-MOUNTAIN**
**3. ROME SDS ANTHEM SS**
To make its new flagship deck, Rome turned the venerable Anthem into a superlight hybrid. No electric engine here — just reverse camber at the tip and tail with the traditional downward bend between. The Anthem SS floats well enough in powder but still lets you slice along well-kept groomers. This versatility is due to Rome's orgy of tech: curved Zylon stringers for tight handling and pop, milled air channels to decrease weight, and a carbon-infused base for extra glide. [*$600; romesnowboards.com*]

**POWDER**
**2. LIB TECH TRAVIS RICE C2 POWER BANANA**
At any given point last season we had 10 new boards awaiting testing, but we always wanted to grab the C2 Power Banana rather than try something new. Its serrated edges let the deck hold a line even in packed snow, while the reverse camber provided great float, letting us ride a shorter board. Translation? It's heaven on powder and great in the park or on groomers, too. The C2 Power Banana may make a one-snowboard man out of you. [*$539; lib-tech.com*]

**BACKCOUNTRY**
**4. RIDE SLACKCOUNTRY**
The Slackcountry enhances the natural euphoria of a powder day by making every turn a little easier. With a big reverse-camber nose, flatness between your feet, and a subtle rocker on the tail, this deck floats easily. Carbon stringers keep it stable in a straight line, and abundant urethane (in the sidewalls and an infused top sheet) deadens buzz from chop. Since the Slackcountry prevents the leg burn of powder, you'll still be on the lift while your buddies are riding barstools. [*$700; ridesnowboards.com*]

## BETTER BINDINGS

*Improve your connection with your board.*

**POWDER**
**FORUM SHAKA**
Your board flexes to carve an arc, and the Shaka's split base lets it follow suit. That means smoother turns and jumps, especially with reverse-camber decks. [*$240; forumsnowboards.com*]

**ALL-MOUNTAIN**
**GNU AGRO**
Not only is the Agro's bio-renewable polymer body recyclable, it's stronger than the average binding's plastic. And the adjust-once-and-done Fastec strap system is a winner. [*$299; gnu.com*]

**PARK**
**BURTON INFIDEL**
Wings on the binding's back and a chunky, asymmetrical ankle strap form a straitjacket for your boot, meaning better control on park terrain. [*$280; burton.com*] —STEVE MAZZUCCHI

# HELMETS

WE ROUNDED UP THE BEST NEW BUCKETS, LOOKING FOR THE PERFECT COMBINATION OF FIT, FEATURES, AND LIGHTNESS.
*by* Steve Mazzucchi

### ◂ GIRO SEAM

The design team at Giro clearly knows what works in a helmet. We loved the single large tab on top that opens 10 vents — it's so immediately accessible, a polar bear could work it. And like a Rolex's second hand, the fit dial in back continuously spins rather than stopping at detents, so you're never stuck a half-click away from the perfect fit. Giro's only (minor) misstep: an immovable chin-strap pad that we found irksome when first sizing the helmet. [*$170; giro.com*]

9

### ▲ K2 CROSSFIRE PRO

The Crossfire is hefty, at 20 ounces, but luxuriously appointed. Cushy leather-trimmed padding on the inside makes it feel like a pillow is strapped to your head. The six front vents can be opened or closed with two tabs that are easy to flick even with gloves. Ear-protector headphones come standard, too (they cost extra on the Smith, POC, and Giro; unavailable on the Shred). Unless you're a Lycra-clad, weight-obsessed racer, you'll appreciate the Crossfire's extras. [*$150; k2skis.com*]

8

### ▲ SMITH MAZE

The 11.5-ounce Maze is so lightweight that we forgot we had it on until we hugged a tree at Whistler and walked away with just a headache. Smith was able to make the lightest CE-certified lid on the market by skimping on basic amenities — you can't adjust the fit, and there's only one vent to unplug. Maybe we were lucky, but our test Maze fit us perfectly. Besides, we'll gladly trade a little less air for not feeling like a bobblehead all day. [*$100; smithoptics.com*]

8

### ▲ POC RECEPTOR BUG TANNER HALL PRO MODEL

Seven-time X Games gold medalist and backcountry ace Tanner Hall is known for his versatility. So is his signature helmet — with a little work. Opening the vents means removing (and stashing) a panel; adjusting the fit requires swapping pads in and out. We liked the snap-in sun-blocking brim, though, and a two-layer construction that protects against punctures better than other lids. [*$130; pocsports.com*]

7

### ▲ SHRED TOUPEE DELUXE

Olympian and World Cup giant slalom champ Ted Ligety founded Shred Optics in 2006, and the Toupee Deluxe is his company's best cranium protector. It has no killer app, except that at 14 ounces, it's the lightest adjustable-fit helmet we tested. Like the POC, aeration is a DIY affair, making you remove (and try not to lose) vent plugs. It's a more futureproof but far costlier choice for ounce-counters than the spartan Smith. [*$299; shredoptics.com*]

8

MICHAEL PIRROCCO (5)

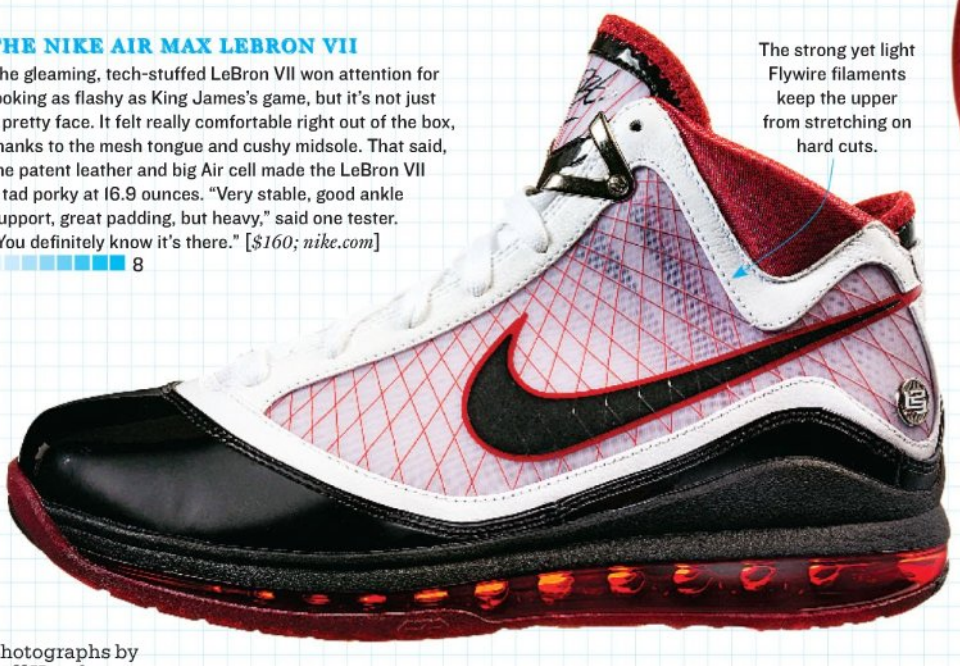
# COURT IS IN SESSION

We had six ballers wear the newest hoops shoes to find the three best for your weekly pickup game. *by* JAMES CHITWOOD

### THE NIKE AIR MAX LEBRON VII

The gleaming, tech-stuffed LeBron VII won attention for looking as flashy as King James's game, but it's not just a pretty face. It felt really comfortable right out of the box, thanks to the mesh tongue and cushy midsole. That said, the patent leather and big Air cell made the LeBron VII a tad porky at 16.9 ounces. "Very stable, good ankle support, great padding, but heavy," said one tester. "You definitely know it's there." [*$160; nike.com*]

8



The strong yet light Flywire filaments keep the upper from stretching on hard cuts.

photographs by
**Jeff Harris**

The heel shows off Converse's oddly named Balls Technology — polyurethane orbs that diffuse impact.

### CONVERSE WEAPON EVO

Despite its old-school design — "I felt like I was in the Bird versus Erving video game," said one reviewer — the lightweight Weapon Evo hung with the most teched-out shoes. "Couldn't ask for better responsiveness," noted a tester, while our 6-foot-7 big man called it "the most comfortable basketball shoe I've worn in a while," praising the supportive cushioning and relatively stiff midsole. The only downside is an unfortunate one: too little grip. Skip them indoors; save them for the playground. [*$75; converse.com*]

7

The TS Cut Creator also comes in a low-top version, for those with ankles of steel.

### ADIDAS TS CUT CREATOR

While Adidas's Commander LT basketball shoe is for big men, this one is intended for guards. It's clearly designed for slicing up the D — we felt quicker going side to side thanks to Adidas's flexible sole and plenty of ankle support. "A real surprise, as I didn't like Adidas in the past because they never quite fit right," said one tester. "But these were my favorite." The shoe bit into our ankle when laced really tight, but our main criticism was aesthetic: We could do without the long, unnecessary Tonka-truck grill slats on the side. [*$110; adidas.com*]

9

EXPERT TESTED

# CHOP SHOP

It's nearly fireplace season, so we asked pro logger Gabe Rygaard to test axes against gnarly 20-inch-long hunks of Douglas fir. *by* STAN HORACZEK

### 1. FISKARS PRO SPLITTING

"I was amazed how much wood I got through with this ax," says Rygaard. The Fiskars's 2.25-pound head is a far cry from the seven-pound Collins monster he uses at work, but Rygaard liked its shape. "The taper is flared like the splitting wedges you pound in with a hammer. I was chopping pieces 30 inches around in just a few cuts." [*$45; fiskars.com*]

9

### 2. TRUE TEMPER 3.5-POUND TOTAL CONTROL

Despite a weighty 3.5-pound steel head and a long 32-inch fiberglass handle, this beast swings smoothly. "It has a nice balance," says Rygaard. Unfortunately, that meaty head often gets lodged, "maybe because it's too short." Also annoying: the big hook at the end of the handle. "If you're hitting the wood hard enough, it will bury in your pinkie." [*$40; lowes.com*]

6

### 3. GERBER EXTRA-LARGE

Fiskars owns Gerber, and their splitting axes are almost exact duplicates, so we gave Rygaard Gerber's chopping ax. "The handle is light, so it has a nice swing," he says, but he wishes it had a grippy texture at the bottom like its sibling. He also laments the Gerber's poor shock absorption: "If you miss and hit the handle — which happens — it can really beat your hands up." [*$69; gerbergear.com*]

7

### 4. STIHL PA 100 FELLING

This 27.5-inch chopper is the shortest of the group, but that's not a criticism. "I really liked the hickory handle," says Rygaard. "It has a nice curve and feels really solid." The steel head also earned satisfactory marks. "It isn't too long, and it has a wide, sharp edge, so it hardly ever got stuck." Solid and efficient, the Stihl is a close runner-up. [*$80; stihlusa.com*]

8

ABOUT OUR EXPERT

When you grow up in Washington and your father owns a logging business, chopping wood becomes a fundamental part of your existence. "I've probably cut more than 200 cords of wood in my life," Rygaard says. Now the 38-year-old and his father, Craig, run Rygaard Logging, one of the five crews starring on History channel's reality show *Ax Men* (season two is now available on DVD).

## THE PERFECT SWING

*Chopping wood works your core and upper body — so long as you know how to swing right.*

Stand slightly more than ax length from the block, feet shoulder-width apart and knees slightly bent. As you slowly raise the ax overhead, slide your top hand (right hand for righties) toward the head. Once you're ready to unleash fury, lower the ax in one fast, fluid motion, sliding your top hand back down and straightening your knees just prior to impact for extra power. If you've done it right, your arms will be fully extended. Hack through a quarter-cord of wood and you'll feel the burn in your arms, chest, back, abs, and hammies. —MARTIN MULKEEN

RYGAARD: JOHN BURCHAM/GETTY. ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOE MCKENDRY; SPECIAL THANKS TO BRENDA BOYKO OF MOSCOW MOUNTAIN SPORT & PHYSICAL THERAPY

RISK: EVERYTHING. REWARD: EVERYTHING.
MOUNTAIN HARD WEAR
PERFORMANCE ELEVATED™
Photo : Cory Richards
Freddie Wilkinson | Mt. Kitchener, Canadian Rockies

**MCGRAW** *continued from page 80*

two sisters, brothers-in-law, and a half-dozen nieces and nephews. He is wearing the same faded T-shirt and khaki shorts from the day before. McGraw has lost much of his hair up top, a fact he doesn't really hide around his close friends, but tonight his Titans cap is anchored tightly to his head. Many in the crowd are on nodding-acquaintance basis with the couple, so they try not to gawk. The only autograph seekers are two six-year-olds. One shyly whispers through baby teeth that she was born in Mississippi, just like Faith.

"Oh, sweetie, that's great," says Faith. "Tell your momma I said hello."

Tim has a big grin on his face. He scans the bench for his nephew. Last year McGraw worked the chain at the games at his daughters' school until he found himself badgering the refs too much. "Maybe it's better I didn't have a son. I bark at these kids a lot, and they're not even my sons." The setting makes McGraw nostalgic for his high school years. "I was a receiver, and every game I'd drop the first pass; I was nervous. But after that I was fine."

He then tells a story about his role in 2004's *Friday Night Lights*. "The first scene I filmed was me hungover the day after I punched my kid. I was so nervous the night before, I stayed out drinking. That hangover isn't an act."

The movie's climactic scene features McGraw looking for his fullback son on the field of the Astrodome after a heartbreaking loss in the state finals. In a long tracking shot, McGraw's face is contorted with pain never before expressed. He finds his son, embraces him, and gives him his own state championship ring. It's not hard to imagine from where McGraw channeled that pain.

"When I was a kid, I went back to the Astrodome a second time to see Tug pitch," McGraw whispers after the kickoff. "I went down to the bullpen and called his name. He ignored me. I thought of that while I was walking that same ground."

Toward the end of the third quarter, Faith looks at her watch. The game is still in doubt, but it's getting late. "We should get the girls home," she says.

"Well, maybe a little longer?" asks Tim. He thinks for a second, then agrees. "You're right."

Tim stands up, hugs his mom, and gives a last wave to his extended family. He takes his wife's hand, and they disappear into a crowd cheering for other people.

I stay for a little while but leave midway through the fourth quarter. As I pull out of the parking lot, I see a balding man in a faded T-shirt and khaki shorts trotting back toward the game. He holds his Titans cap in his hand — going hatless is his disguise. ("I made sure everyone got home safe, but I couldn't miss the end of that game," he'll tell me later.)

The crowd cheers, and the PA announces that Franklin has just scored the go-ahead touchdown. The man smiles broadly and begins running toward the lights.

There's not a black hat in sight.

**BIRDMAN** *continued from page 88*

I strolled back along Avenida Atamu Tekena a happy man. The Birdman was on! No longer a mere tourist, I was a participant. A celebrant. What an island! What a town! Paradise, with rocks. But that night at the cafe, Wilo arrived looking heartsick. He'd been thinking. Of the difficulties. Of the dangers. "I'll do everything like we agreed," he said, "and even provide hot shower and towel." He then named a price six times the original. I pointed out that I didn't need the shower and towel. I counter-offered half his figure, still a substantial raise.

"Well, okay," he said, not disguising his disappointment. We parted soon after, Wilo with his regrets, me with disgruntled-water-safety-officer tabu on my head and word of a big swell on the way.

IT WAS A PERFECT MORNING FOR A BIRDman. Bright. Blustery. I hiked up the ancient Ao Road singing, stopping just outside the gates of Orongo. From that great height I could see the corduroy of the swell, its pattern of shade and shimmer, and hear the roar as it gnawed at the shore far below. There was no Birdman king to signal "go!" No rival to compete against — no Esai Morales to my Jason Scott Lee. No one would be trying to murder me, and I wouldn't be eaten if I lost, unless by a shark. But at that moment I believed I shared something of the spirit of the Birdman: for God, protein, and poontang!

I started running down the volcano toward the sea, dodging boulders, soaring down sudden inclines into 10-foot-tall grasses, past horses that craned their necks and showed me the whites of their eyes. The pell-mell descent took me back to boyhood running, tireless and hilarious, and seemingly always downhill. And back to the boyhood of man, when men sat around fires and made shit up, saying, "Who has the egg, he is the Birdman."

At the end of the meadow, I passed under the shade of eucalyptus — reforestation — then back out into bright sunlight, the cliffs of Mataveri coming into sight now. I was leaping erosion ditches and scrambling over rocks, until at last I stood panting at the edge of a cliff some 40 feet above the sea. In *Rapa Nui*, Jason Scott Lee dove about a hundred feet into the water with his totora-reed mat. But that was the movies for you. A debris field completely surrounds the base of the volcano. Wilo had shown me the best jump-off spot on the island, and at 40 feet it was just high enough to be scary fun.

But where was Wilo with my totora-reed surf mat? I'd caught my breath by the time I saw him rounding the point, coming from Hanga Roa on his Jet Ski and leading the way for a fishing boat with what looked like two uniformed soldiers — what was up with that? Apparently, when it came to manning the support boat, marines were cheaper than fishermen. Mr. Adventure went airborne over a 12-foot swell, gunned it, and carved a hard turn below me. Time to jump.

Heart in throat, I smacked in hard and clean, remembering to keep my feet together to protect the Eyes of Make Make, but forgetting to hold on to my headband, which whisked away on impact. The waves seethed and slurped at the cliffs; I had to get away at once.

"Toss me the totora-reed torpedo!" I shouted, and not with a straight face, either.

"I don't do this for money!" Wilo shouted back. "I do this for the love of adventure!"

Wilo, I noted, had not worn his warrior garb. I feared he hadn't brought the totora-reed torpedo, either, and I was right. The marines crept in a little closer, one of them rummaging in the bottom of the boat and coming up with a surfboard, which he flung over the side. I swam for it, climbed aboard, and pointed it toward Motu Nui. Funny thing, perspective. From up on Orongo it looks like a trifling distance, but from belly level, Motu Nui, a mile and a half away, was a distant dot.

No wonder the Birdman racers often drowned in the "treacherous" currents, according to accounts. Everyone on the island who discouraged me from trying cited the profound depth, and they were right: The islands are tips of seamounts a thousand feet tall. For the Rapa Nui, who knew their waters but feared their gods, it would've made for a formidable void full of spirits and monsters, not to mention an undepleted supply of sharks.

If there was a lesson in the inconsistent accounts I'd read, it was that you had to make your own Birdman race, and mine was to paddle this slippery little surfboard, and paddle like hell. Up, up the mighty rollers, the crests blowing apart in my face, and down, seeming to slip backward a yard for every two of progress. The marines stuck close to me, as if I were some sort of injured cetacean they couldn't quite figure out how to save. One was middle-aged, a dead ringer for Manuel Noriega, the other a youth, soon seasick. After about two hours I reached the first of the three islets, the fang-shape Motu Iti, dead in the water and half-seasick too, flinging one arm forward, hauling it back, flinging the other. Noodle arms, surfers call the condition.

"Hurry up, Boo-key," Noriega pleaded. "We want to go home!"

An hour later, I was there, abreast of Motu Nui, an embattled dome that the swells half-swallowed, pouring off in cascades of foam. I sat up to rest and admire the spectacle.

"We are hungry!" Noriega cried. "*Vamanos!*" And just then his boat ran out of gas.

I tuned all of that out and turned to look at the cliffs of Orongo, the Birdman's view I had coveted for months. "I have the egg!" I bellowed. But no way was I going to shave my eyebrows and head, or grow my nails all year, or spend six months in lockdown on the other volcano with just a priest for company, as the Birdmen of yore had to do. As with so much of life, better to be a hopu than a king.

I had a story to tell at least, and doubtless I would, with various embellishments, for years to come, beginning that night in the bars of Hanga Roa, to the woman with the biggest clitoris, of course, if I could find her.

EXPLORE THESE SITES WHILE
TREKKING THE WEB

DON'T JUST SEE THE GAME.
FEEL IT.
OWN IT.

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Since 1891, accuracy under adverse conditions
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**LOST** *continued from page 104*

that she couldn't remember where.

Walt tells Linda now that Christopher is still missing, that he's been in the water 13 hours.

"My God, that's a long time," she says.

He calls Robyn, too, gritting his teeth. "Tell Angela I'm alive," he says.

His voice is weak, raspy. She can barely tell it's him. "Walt?" she shouts.

"We've lost Christopher," he says.

"What? *What?* How? *Where is he?*" She's hysterical, asking about her son. She's talking so fast, asking so many questions that he doesn't want to answer, so he hangs up.

An orange-and-white coast guard boat pulls up next to the Open Range at 9 AM. For an hour and a half, Walt has been sitting on the beanbag, moaning. A door opens on the side of the boat, and two men pull Walt inside. He waves goodbye to the guys on the Open Range, who stand in stupefaction.

The ship's captain asks Walt if he wants to be taken to the hospital or stay on the boat as they go search for Christopher. "Let's go," Walt says. But he chooses to sit below in the cabin, because he doesn't want to be there when someone spots Christopher floating on his stomach, bloated, dead — he doesn't want to be the one.

So he's escorted down a flight of stairs to a room filled with life jackets and flare guns. An officer in charge of keeping an eye on Walt sits opposite on a bench and says only, "You look like you regret something. Do you regret something?" Walt just shakes his head in his hands — he doesn't want to talk.

ALL THE WAY FROM CLEARWATER, OUT of the skies above northeastern Florida, the Jayhawk helicopter rides 100 feet above the water. It's got a bright orange tail and white-striped body, like the fish from *Finding Nemo*. At 300 feet the trained men aboard can see gulls hitting the surface, but they're flying even lower this morning, as low as they can go, because they're looking for a 12-year-old boy.

The helicopter goes into a right-hand orbit, circling once, then again, initially lowering to 50 feet. The flight mechanic had seen the dark-brown hair and white face in the tide line, had seen a body floating there, bobbing. Tom Emerick, a rescue swimmer, is already wearing a shorty wetsuit and puts on a black mask with a snorkel.

Lowered 20 feet down by a thick hoist cable, Emerick hits the water feetfirst. He swims toward Christopher, the boy's small pale eyes staring at him, unblinking. Emerick signals for the helicopter to send the basket down. It's 9:15 AM, three miles from where his father had been discovered two hours earlier.

"Hi, how you doing, my name is Tom," Emerick says.

Christopher says nothing, barely makes a move — just watches as Emerick pulls him into the stainless-steel basket. "Don't climb out of it, okay, buddy?" he shouts. It's deafening beneath the whir. The rotor wash is coming down so hard that it stings them, nearly suffocates them.

Christopher rides up in the basket silently, looking down at Emerick still in the water, studying him like a piece of string.

In the stomach of the helicopter, Emerick wraps a wool blanket over Christopher's shoulders, checks his breathing, his pulse, has him track his index finger with his eyes. He asks him if he wants something to drink, and when Christopher doesn't answer, he makes a motion with his hands to emulate taking a sip from a cup, and Christopher nods. Sitting on a bench in the helicopter, he shivers, freckles beneath the dark hair. His skin is warm; he's slightly hypothermic. But other than the jellyfish stings, there doesn't appear to be anything the matter with him.

ROBYN AND ED TAKE CHRISTOPHER home on September 8, after he stays one night at Halifax hospital in Daytona. He can barely walk, so they carry him back and forth from his bed to the bathroom. He can't put any weight on his legs because of the jellyfish stings. He's dehydrated. He eats carrot sticks, bananas, pieces of chicken. They let him watch Disney movies, tuck him under his Tigger and Pooh bedsheets. Robyn goes in and sits beside him, asks him softly what he saw out there in the ocean, what it was like. Two days, and she asks him this several times, and finally he tells her: "It was dark." A whole sentence.

Robyn and Ed have a beautiful home on a quiet street with a pool out back that Christopher can play in. The property is bolted down so tight, Christopher can never elope. The front and back doors have key locks on the inside as well as the outside. The garage is locked. There are locks on all the sliding doors. The house has an alarm system, with a chime function.

When Robyn was living alone with Angela and Christopher, he was nearly impossible to care for, and as a single mother she felt she had no other choice but to put him in a place where other people could take care of him 24 hours a day. He got kicked out of day care because he bit other children. They had to put a harness on the bus for him, a five-point seat belt, because without it he'd run up and down the aisles, hitting students and even the driver. Christopher split his weekends between Robyn and Walt and stayed at the group home on weekdays.

When Robyn and Ed first saw Walt after the incident, it was on the dock, as he stepped off the coast guard boat; he was sunburned and babbling like a child. They didn't have the energy to confront him, to yell at him, to tell him they had been right. They were just happy that Christopher was alive.

Three weeks after he comes home from the hospital, Christopher is named grand marshal of the parade at Disney World. Robyn and Ed make sure to keep a sharp eye on him the whole time and to hold his hand. He gets a Florida Safety Hero award. He gets to stand on the bridge of a coast guard cutter and pretend to drive.

**GRAND MARSHAL** Christopher – joined by Walt, Angela, Robyn, and Ed – was feted at Disney World.

IN JANUARY, WALT MOVES TO VANCOUver, Washington, just across the bridge from Portland. He takes a job contracting with the FDIC, closing a bank, for good money, and thus has to live so far away. He flies back to Florida on Friday evenings every two weeks just so he can spend a day and a half with Christopher and Angela before getting up at 4 AM on Mondays and flying back. When he drops Angela off at Robyn and Ed's house, they do not wave at him as he leaves.

He lives in a hotel room, a suite with comfortable furniture and a nice bed, big wooden cabinets where he can store his things. He goes to the bank in the morning, watches cable in the hotel after work, and lounges around in his sweatpants and gray Columbia fleece pullover. He shares a white Pontiac Vibe hatchback with one of his co-workers. He's a tall guy, 46 years old, a little pudgy, with high blood pressure.

In March, Walt goes to Florida and takes Christopher back out to the beach at Ponce Inlet. They sit up in the front seat of the Celica listening to an audiotape of *The Aristocats*. Christopher eats a bag of Doritos Cool Ranch chips and, later, two McDonald's double cheeseburgers, layer by layer. "Aaah, eeehh, uhhhhh!" he shouts, off and on. They drive by the mall where he was found in the fountain with the pennies. "Wow, dude!" Walt says, looking into the empty bag. He leans in and puts his face right up to Christopher's, almost touching his nose, and says, "You're my best buddy." Christopher giggles and then stares at the passing cars.

Christopher walks on the beach and looks around, then goes into a bathroom to put on his swim trunks. He dips his feet into the water, recoils upon discovering how cold it is. The waves press into the rocks, the jetty long and uneven out to the ocean. Christopher lies on his stomach in the sand, laughing.

But when Walt takes him back to the group home at around 9:30 that night, Christopher, who had been silent and mostly calm the entire day, looks at his father, then throws his cup of McDonald's water at the car window. When Walt gets out of the car in front of the group home, Christopher runs into the empty street and sits on the concrete of the cul-de-sac, beneath the streetlight. He looks lost and frightened in the glow. He starts hitting his head with his fists and shouting at the top of his lungs.

"Please, buddy, please," Walt begs.

Walt puts his hands under Christopher's arms and tries to stand him up. Christopher won't budge. Walt's voice quivers, "I know you don't want me to leave, man, but I have to."

He manages to stand Christopher upright and drag him about 20 feet toward the door of the home, and then Christopher jumps at him, sinks his teeth into Walt's arm, so Walt lets go and falls halfway to the ground. It had been so easy to forget all day.

Walt cries out in pain.

"Why, Christopher, why?"

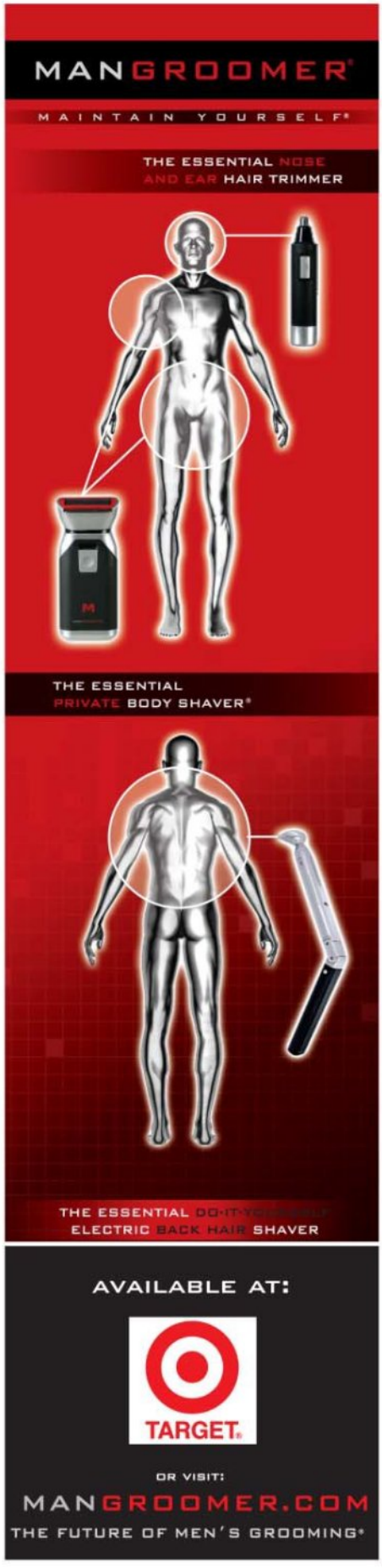
Tears are running down his face, with nothing but the back of his bitten arm to wipe them away.

Christopher just stands there.

WALT HAS TRIED TO IMAGINE WHAT that night was like for Christopher. He has imagined it repeatedly, in his sleep, at his work, in his rented hotel suite with the curtains drawn, the empty plastic soup containers on the counter. He has imagined Christopher giggling and splashing, the fish touching his back and arms; Christopher staring in awe at the dolphin snouts and falling stars, soothed by the foam tops of the waves; has imagined the whole night was like this one big adventure, the biggest adventure Christopher will ever have in his life, floating on his back as the water warmed his ears, in wonder as the sounds changed beneath the surface; has imagined that those sounds captivated his son's imagination, and that since Christopher loves to float and swim more than anything, perhaps he even had fun. And the phosphorescence, the most colorful thing, he hopes it passed his son in a trail on the top of the water, long and thin, sparkling there like something hopeful; prays that Christopher got to see it. He has to believe he did. He can just picture Christopher sticking his hand in the filmy substance, holding it up to the moonlight, slick and shiny and Disney green. In fact, he cannot bring himself to imagine anything else. Walt aches for the day, a day that will probably never come, when he'll be able to actually talk to Christopher, and ask him about what he saw and what he felt and what he was thinking, how he survived.

But really, all he can do is wonder.

PRESTON MACK/WDW PHOTO

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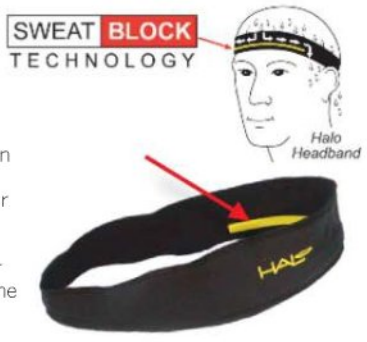


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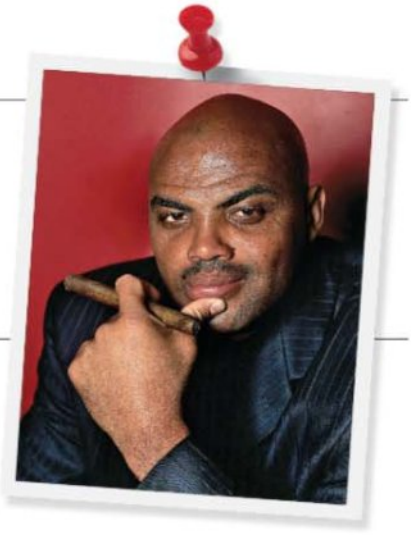
# Survival Skills
# Charles Barkley



*Sir Charles, 46, is in his 10th year calling it like he sees it as an NBA analyst for TNT.*

## What experience most changed your life?
Flunking Spanish in high school. I had to go to summer school and didn't get to graduate with my class. One week I was the big man on campus and everybody was my friend. The next week I found out they really weren't. I watched graduation and cried for two hours. Nobody cared. That taught me a valuable lesson: You can't trust everybody around you.

## What skill should every man possess?
It's important for a man to know how to do his own cleaning around the house. This is just my opinion in life: People who are messy, their whole lives are messy. I don't believe in stockpiling junk. You use it, then you get rid of it. Clutter depresses me.

## What should every man know about women?
How clean they're gonna keep his house.

## What should every man know about money?
How to save it. I had to step back and take a look at my gambling. Just because you have money doesn't mean you should lose it. I haven't gambled in over a year now. But I know I'm going to gamble again at some point. I'm a Vegas guy. I like going to Vegas.

## What's the best advice you've ever received?
When I first got to the NBA, I bought, like, seven cars. Dr. J pulled me aside and told me that you can only drive one car at a time and that the money I made playing basketball had to last me for the rest of my life. He made me take all those cars back.

## What should a man be able to do with his hands?
Get a good manicure. Do it once a week. Because when you shake people's hands, it's important to have soft hands.

## What's the best cure for a hangover?
There's no cure — you just have to suffer through it. When I got my DUI, I had to take a lot of alcohol-related classes, and I learned that it's not a good thing when you puke. That's your body telling you, "Hey, you're an idiot. You've had too much to drink, and I'm going to protect you."

## When is it okay for a man to lie?
I think it's important to tell the truth. One reason I'm successful on television is that people know I'm going to call it like I see it. I've had players and agents call me to complain, but I tell them, "Look, I'm just doing my job. You didn't play well." I hate it when people say I'm outspoken. When white guys speak, they're experts. When black guys speak, they're outspoken. People just aren't used to a black guy having his own opinions and saying what he wants to say.

## What's the best way to survive in jail?
No matter how long you're in jail, it's a long time. Just use the time to think. I was sitting there thinking, I'm a fucking idiot for putting myself in this situation.

## What piece of clothing should every man own?
A bunch of different shoes that go with a bunch of different outfits. I'm a shoe guy. I've got 150 pairs.

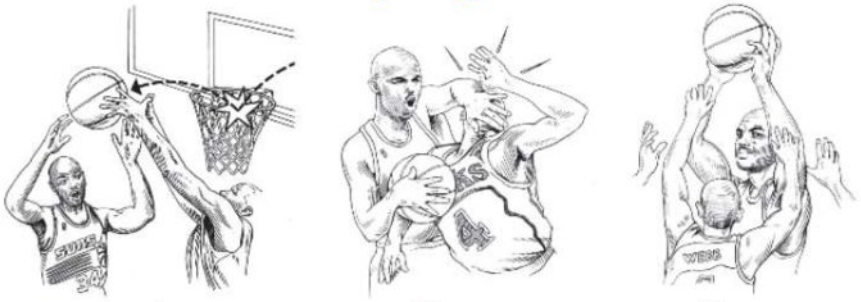
## What piece of clothing should a man never wear?
I don't think there's an answer to that, because it depends on what you look good in. I learned that from Reggie Jackson. He was commenting about fashion one day and says, "Oh, no, no, no. Style doesn't make you. You make style."

## What's the most important room in a man's house?
Wherever he watches television. I watch sports 24/7 because every time I watch sports there's a chance I can see greatness.

## What should a man do before he dies?
Every man by a certain stage in life should have done something good. I wanted to run for governor of Alabama, but that's on the back burner now. Everything I say and everything I do is going to be an issue, and I just don't need that drama in my life right now. My new goal is to learn Spanish.

—INTERVIEWED BY STEVEN RUSSELL

## What's the best way to get a rebound?



I II III

When I started playing, they wouldn't give me the ball, so I had to get it myself. Everyone is enamored with shooting, but rebounding is what got me drafted. First, forget all this blocking-out shit. Just go get the ball (I). That's it. Go. Get. The. Ball. It doesn't matter who's in your way. You're going to get some fouls, but you're going to get more rebounds (II). Once you have the ball, always keep it high, because those little guys will be trying to grab it away (III).

WALTER IOOSS JR./SPORTS ILLUSTRATED/GETTY IMAGES. ILLUSTRATIONS: JOE MCKENDRY

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